

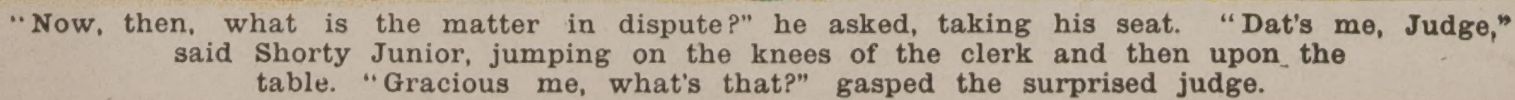
A COMIC WEEKLY OF COMIC STORIES BY COMIC AUTHORS.

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NEW YORK, MARCH 14, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

BY PETER PAD.



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

❖ SNAPS ❖

A Comic Weekly of Comic Stories by Comic Authors.

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NEW YORK, MARCH 14, 1900.

Price 5 Cents.

The Two Shortys;

OR,

Playing in Great Luck.

BY PETER PAD.

CHAPTER I.

Shorty was a jolly little fellow, full of fun, up to no end of mischief, as lively as a box of monkeys, and as good-natured as they make them.

If by chance any one did succeed in putting up a job on him, which rarely happened, Shorty took it good-naturedly enough, but all the same he watched his chance for a return snap, and wasn't happy till the other fellow got it.

Shorty's name was George, with two or three surnames, according to the folks he had lived with, but everybody knew him as Shorty, so that is good enough for us.

He had been a foundling in the poor house, adopted by this, that and the other kind-hearted but misguided gentleman, and had finally been able to look out for himself, and had gone into the negro minstrel business.

Shorty was a little runt, and hence his name; but if he was little in size, he was big in mischief, and never missed a chance to work a racket.

After a tour with a circus and a trip with some minstrels managed by one Sergeant Polly, of New York, Shorty had picked up a long-legged, good-natured, enterprising fellow by the name of Ned Shanks, and a new company was organized, with Shorty at the head and Shanks as the manager.

This company, known as the New York Minstrels, and composed of first-class artists only, began its travels in Philadelphia, and continued on to Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Detroit, St. Louis and Louisville, playing to the full capacity of the biggest and finest theatres in those cities.

Shorty was in luck at last, and he raked in the dollars with both fists, and at the same time he did not miss an opportunity to get all the fun there was coming to him out of life.

Shorty and his New York Minstrels arrived in the hustling, bustling city of Chicago, after a long ride in the cars, during which time, however, the little fellow had managed to play no

end of jokes to pass the time away, and then they proceeded to settle themselves for a week's business, to say nothing of fun.

On their arrival at the hotel they found that nice, comfortable rooms had been reserved for them, and Shorty and Shanks, having selected a suite together, locked themselves in and engaged in a brushing and scouring crusade against the dust from their journey.

"Dere 'pears ter be more dust dan dere is me," laughed Shorty, as he emerged from a basin.

"And I'm so long that I catch twice as much as anybody else. Sometimes I'm 'fraid they'll arrest me for trying to carry part of one State into another," joked Shanks, as he mopped his ears out.

"All yer'd hab ter do would be ter reinstate it."

"Dust to dust; carry me out and bury me decently, after that joke."

"Don't talk 'bout berries, when yer can get 'em for ten cents a quart."

"Cheese it, or I'll cry for quarter."

"I'll gib yer one; yer needn't cry for it."

"I'm afraid this Chicago air must have taken effect upon your mental perceptions," said Shanks.

"'Pon my what?"

"Your intellectual abilities."

"Wind 'em up like a watch?"

"I'll call a cop and have him wind you up with a club, you lunatic you."

"Den I'd be a club 'stead of a stem-winder."

"You'll be wanting the services of some undertaker if you keep on getting off those rash jokes."

"I'll undertaker ter get 'em off 'thout any stiff juggler's assistance," said Shorty.

"Cork up, or I'll muzzle you and lock you up in that big

trunk you're rooting in. Why, it would make a bully house for you," laughed Shanks.

"I ain't like der elephant an' am willin' ter leave my trunk behind me, but I'll tell yer one thing, Shanks, an' dat ain't two, I think I see a chance for a quiet little racket dis afternoon," said Shorty, brightening up like a fresh coined silver dollar.

"That suits me like a hollow log does a coon. But how in thunder did you tumble to anything here, I don't see," replied Shanks.

"Oh, if dere's any show for ter hav' any fun layin' loose 'round dese or any other corners, an' Shorty ain't fly 'nuff ter drop ter it an' scoop it in on der half-shell, den yer git me a job in a shoe-peg shop, or learnin' eels ter swim 'thout rigglin' dere tail."

"I believe you smell it out like a fly does a sugar barrel, or a crow does a dead horse."

"Dat's be caws I keep my eyes an' ears glued open," coddled Shorty, and the dinner hour drawing near, they started downstairs.

"Yer 'member what I tol' yer 'bout a racket 'fore dinner, don't yer?" asked Shorty, as they were standing on the stoop smoking their cigars after dinner.

"Yes, you bet," replied Shanks.

"Com' 'long, then, an' let's slide up ter our rooms an' I'll fix things in no time," continued our little hero, and paddling into the room, he commenced lifting things out of the big trunk until it was nearly empty.

"Now, how's dat for a Saratogy mansion, 'f ther baggage-smashers didn't get dere destroyin' mudhooks on ter it?" asked Shorty, jumping into it and letting down the lid.

"I think the best thing I can do is to express you off to Old Scratch while I've got you so comfortable."

"Yes, dat'll do. Now I want a couple more holes for air in dere sides. I can fix dat wid my knife in no time."

"Now, what you want me to do?" asked Shanks.

"All yer got ter do is ter climb inter der nex' room, lock der door an' listen ter an' enjoy der fun dat's in here, yer can hear ebery word," said Shorty, and Shanks having shut himself up in the other room, Shorty rang the bell connecting with the office, and a few moments later a waiter was heard shuffling along the passage, winding up by knocking at the door.

"Who's dat?" asked Shorty, holding the trunk lid a few inches open, and besides he wanted the waiter to hear his voice in the room.

"It's de waitah, sah."

"Oh, all rite; com' in quick!" exclaimed Shorty, letting the lid down softly, and a second later the darkey opened the door, stepped in, looked around, scratched his wool, went out and looked at the number on the door again, came back and moved around the room cautiously; then, as he started for the door, he said:

"Dat ends it; bress der Lord, I'se gwine ter lead a more 'ligious life dan I'se been a doin'; dis is a warnin', shuah. Talk 'bout yer spiritoolers, dey can't be a sarcumstance side of dis 'Com' in quick.' Clem Johnsing, dis is a lesson, an' yer better pay som' 'tention ter dis miricul."

Then the old fellow went out, closing the door very carefully behind him, and Shorty and Shanks emerged from their hiding-places and enjoyed a hearty laugh at the old darkey's sudden reformation.

"Now dig back ter yer hole an' I'll crawl inter my nest agin'," said Shorty, after he had stretched his legs, giving the bell another pull and quietly resuming his loafing position in the trunk, leaving the lid partly open.

Presently footsteps, mysterious footsteps, no longer shuffling and careless, came along the passageway.

"Is dat der waiter again?"

"Yes, s-a-h."

"Why do yer come?"

"Y-y-o-u r-r-a-n-n-g, s-s-a-h."

"I ring, ha! ha! Enter," laughed Shorty, most sardonically,

letting the lid down quietly, and a moment after the door was opened and Mr. Clem Johnsing entered with trembling knees, and again the room was looked over, the closets and wardrobes, and even up the chimney and out of the window examined into.

"I know'd it was wuss den butterfly foolishness comin' back ter dis 'partment; if dey wants ter reach an' wait on dis flyin' ghost, dey've got ter build a balloon an' go sailin' 'round thro' de air ter meet 'im. I'd like ter know what he was 'ha! ha! 'bout; I guess he ain't much 'quainted wid dis hotel or de spirit 'd know dat when he jings der bell dis dark's got ter scramble," mused the old man. "I don't pertickyuler keer for waitin' an' 'tendin' on dis spiritool ghost, tho' he don't 'pear ter be a heavy eater or drinker, but the 'socation is not hardly de cheese dat I've been in de habit ob movin' in," and he shook his head sorrowfully, went out on his tiptoes and streaked it down the stairs.

He was seated explaining the mysterious case to another old nig, who was drinking it in with open eyes, ears and mouth, when the bell rang out again.

"Thirty-four! Johnsing, thirty-four again. This is the third time he's rung; see what he wishes at once" called off one of the proprietors, who happened to be behind the office desk.

"Please, sah, I don't hardly think de gemmen wishes for anything from dis world. 'Cause as how he's a ghost," exclaimed Johnsing.

"Ghost! Don't wish anything! I'm 'fraid you've been drinking, Johnsing," said his boss, looking up laughingly. "Here, Julius, you go up along with Johnsing, an' see if you can find what they want up there."

Julius, who was a light-colored, middle-aged nig, went jumping up two stairs at a time, till the old man fetched him up with:

"Is yer 'pared ter meet folks from oder worl's?"

"Oder whaz?" asked the corn-colored nig, halting suddenly.

"Oh, notink, only when yez shakin' han's wid a ghos' an' bowin' ter a spirit, mebbe yer won't be so peart an' hurry-like," said the old man, solemnly and impressively.

"Why, has de gemmen in thirty-foah a 'quaintance wid—wid ghosts?"

"Shoh, don't yer know dere ain't any gemmen in thirty-foah?" explained the old man.

"What is we goin' up dere foah?"

"Ter converse wid de spirits an' go back agin."

"Shuah?"

"Well, yeah we be, anyway. I s'pose I'll knock," said the old man, and he tapped gently, while the young corn-colored fellow got a shade lighter and hung back, keeping hold of the old man's coat-tail.

"Is dat nigger back yere agin'?" demanded Shorty.

"Dey m-make m-me, s-sah, co-com' u-up, sah, when y-you r-ring," stammered Clem.

"Thort yer said dere wasn't no one in de room," remarked corn-color, getting reassured at hearing a human voice in the room.

"Shut up, nig; dat ain't noffin' mortal dat's speakin'."

"Death! dust! ashes! winding sheets! blood! gore! coffins an' graveyards, are more in my line! Enter, nigs," groaned Shorty, shutting himself up in the trunk, while the two nigs, with trembling knees, distended eyes, hearts in their mouths, went around the room holding on to each other for comfort, and encouraging each other with "you go fust."

"Dere, Julius, wid all der sirkumstandshull evidence dat you've seed an' heard, don't yer sort feel that yer'd been holdin' de plow-handles 'long wid som' spiritools?" asked the old man, as they finally started for the door.

"I don't wanter talk yet till I get my heart an' bref all rite agin', for I will 'low, brudder Clem dat dat voice did kinder flustrate dis pusson so dat for a minit I was sorter 'fraid, but de courage in my buzzum 'lone kep' me up. Dey can ring thirty-foah till dere tired, but dev ain't goin' to get dis nig up dere any moah. Dat convussashun 'bout blood an' coffins an'

graves ain't jess what dis chile keers 'bout lis'ning ter," answered the corn-colored darkey, ponderously, and they started back to the office, while Shorty and Shanks came out and laughed till they were tired over the fright of the darkeys and the success of the racket.

"Now lite yer imported cabbage cheroot, stretch yerself round loose an' careless like, an' I'll ring agin'," said Shorty.

It was a long time before the bell was answered, but at last there came a timid knock.

"Well, why in thunder don't you come in?" called out Shanks, Shorty not wishing his voice to be heard, although he had disguised it in speaking from the trunk.

"Dere it is 'gain, 'nother invitashun ter der boneyard recep— Gol Almighty! Bress de lam'!" exclaimed the old man, on coming into the room and finding Shorty and Shanks sitting quietly smoking.

"Well, what appears to be the matter here? I have had to ring four times without an answer, and the first waiter that does come looks as if I'd scared him out of six months' growth," said Shanks, sternly.

"He's 'live, shuah," mumbled Clem.

"You'll find I'm very much alive if I ain't waited on better than this."

"Youse rang foah times, sah?"

"Four times."

"An' dere was no one come up, sah?"

"You're the first I've seen."

Clem scratched his head, rubbed his eyes, shuffled his feet uneasily, and kept feeling of himself with his hands. A happy thought flashed across him, and opening the door, he looked long and fixedly at 34, then closing it, he said:

"Gemmen, dere's a great deal ob der resurecshun day's business gwine on ter-day, ter my sartin knowledge, but I'se ready ter wait on yer, seein' yer humans."

Having dispatched him with some trifling errand, Shorty and Shanks pulled out for a look at the theatre and a cruise around the city before evening.

They found everything hypercooon at Hooley's, and were very much pleased with the appearance and size of the building, the stage and seating capacity, and the general manner in which everything had been attended to and carried out.

"'F we can manage to jam dis house for der nex' two weeks, I'se satisfied, an' yer can go right out an' pawn yer boots that 'tain't goin' ter be any slouch of a gang dat's goin' ter get up an' do it, wid all dem oder opery an' high-toned biz a-runnin' at der same time. I'se goin' ter gib dem a new bill ebery night. Der gang has got ter tie demselves loose from der eyebrows down, an' act for a squar' hundred chips on der dollar, an' if der Chicago boys wants ter see a high-rollin', heavy-weather show, 'ere's where they've got ter pile inter," explained Shorty, as they left the building.

"Well, which way now?"

"Ain't a bit more pertickuler dan dat man in front of us dat's skatin' off inter der gutter," said Shorty, pointing to an elderly and fat gentleman, who had unfortunately stepped upon a banana skin, and the next minute was darting with lightning force and sickening sensations toward the gutter, clutching madly at vacancy to hold himself up, and eventually sitting down on the hardest and edgiest stone within a mile, with a force that drove it some inches further into the ground than the street pavers had been able to get it; this fact the fat man hardly seemed to feel interested in, his time and attention being taken up in feeling if his scalp was really off or the joints in his backbone loose, while he sprinkled profanity around that locality in a manner that threatened to depopulate it.

"Dropped somfin', didn't yer?" asked Shorty, laughingly, on coming up to the bruised, excited and profane old fellow.

"None of your darned business! Dropped something! Great sacrificed Moses! When a man falls and breaks himself all to atoms, then to have some grinning idiot come along and ask you if you've dropped anything!" he growled, getting on his

feet slowly and groping around after half a dozen parcels he had dropped. He was picking up the last bundle, when a news-boy with an armful of extras struck him fair behind, and the next minute he had skinned the bridge of his nose and was sitting on the curbstone calling upon heaven to witness how he was persecuted.

"Put der shutters up on that tater trap of yourn, an' don't make a howlin' ole Bashi Bazouk of yerself 'cause yer happen to kiss der sidewalk wid der place dat yer use ter sit down on. Der best thing for yer ter do is ter climb up on yer knees, sing a little hymn, snatch yer traps tergether, pass a tract or two on swearin' aroun', an' den bow to der audience an' sneak off home," advised Shorty, coddlingly.

Then the fat and furious old gent arose, and swore three-story oaths at people who couldn't mind their own business, while he snatched up his bundles.

"There's some duck-legged idiots—Suffering, suspended Mahomet! what's that?" he exclaimed, as a rotten orange took him fair and square in the ear, splattering him all over, while a loud boyish yell of exultation came from around the corner, and to which point the fat man directed his flying footsteps.

Hooley's Theatre was well filled when the curtain rose on the first performance of the New York Minstrels. Their coming had been well heralded by the press of the city, the show had been billed and advertised up to the handle, but the best card in the deck to draw was Shorty, whose rackets in all the other cities had been laughed at by the boys of Chicago, and who were anxious to catch a glimpse of the little joker.

Everything worked like a charm; the troupe never appeared to a better advantage, and received rounds of well-earned applause. Shorty, of course, received an enthusiastic reception, and was loudly and heartily cheered by the downstairs part of the house, while the "gods" in the gallery fairly made it howl, and bombarded him with questions in regard to his former rackets.

"How's dat snoozer yer fought der duel wid?" yelled one.

"He's wearin' ice earrings ter keep 'is hed cool, an'll com' out all hunk," answered Shorty, laughing up at his youthful questioner.

"Dat oder nigger show didn't send ter yer for any more bumbees, did dey?" chirped another.

"Nary postal card 'bout bees; so I guess dey're supplied."

"Der Our Boys Club want yer ter come back an' knock dat ball ober agin."

"Dey thort we was fresh," chuckled Shorty, winking his eye to the young arabs, with whom he was always a prime favorite, and who howled their delight now in their own peculiar manner.

"How 'bout dat han'-organ racket?"

"Dey played so long an' so hard dat dey loosened der bricks in der chimneys, an' der back teeth in der heads of der people in der hotel, den dey took 'em out inter a lot an' fenced 'em 'roun' so dey couldn't get out, an' sot 'em ter playin' 'gin one 'nuther; dey played der nails out of der fences, an' der advertisements off der signs roun' der corner; but dey kept on, an' finally, jess as dey was playin' 'Way Down on der Swanee Riber,' one of der organs busted, 'nuder one went up on 'Mother, I've Cum Hom' ter Die.' Dey sent der corpus of der grinders roun' ter a sassige mill, an' der rest groun' way 'Pat Malloy,' killed a big feller, an' bust his organ inter flinders; altergether it was a purty sight, an', boys, I'm sorry yer wasn't dere lookin' at it. Der last ole masheen turned inside out yesterday when dey tried ter make it play 'Captain Jinks of der Horse Marines,' an' dere eatin' der las' of der sassiges in Detroit now dat was made from dat tough ole grinder," said Shorty, so comically that the boys yelled till the roof of the theatre seemed in danger of coming off.

"Good heavens, Shorty, what were you feeding the boys on to-night?" asked Shanks, as they left the theatre that night at the close of the performance.

"Oh, a little wind puddin', dat's all. Der boys an' me allus, stick as tight tergether as two gumdrops. Som' of dese frilly,

high-toned fakirs dey plays an' looks an' fixes demselves so's ter get der boxes an' parquette ter wave der blow rags at dem, but jess as soon as I strike der footlights I takes a squint up at der boys in der gallery, an' 'fi suit dem, dese front row folks can keep der wipes in der pockets if dey don't want to wave dem," replied Shorty, striking a match on the leg of his pants and lighting a cigar.

"And that's where your head's level and you strike the nail square on the top every clip, little fellow," answered Shanks, laughing.

"Dat's jess where I aims for."

"Early to go back to the hotel, ain't it?"

"I don't feel snoozy," said Shorty.

"How're you on the shoot?" asked Shanks, pointing to a lit-up target gallery on the other side of the street.

"Well, I can hit der side of a barn, but I ain't so good shootin' 'round corners. D'yer want ter try yer luck?" asked our little friend, leading the way across to the gallery.

Having selected a target, Shanks led off with several good shots, Shorty followed, and letting the muzzle of the gun drop slowly till he covered the centre, he pulled the trigger and the bell rang sharply out denoting a bull's-eye.

"Little bobtail's gun went off when he had his eyes shut and made a bull's-eye. How's that for a scratch?" sneered one of a party of young fellows, who had been passing remarks about our hero ever since he entered.

Shorty made no reply to this taunt, but leveling his gun once more he took careful and deliberate aim and once more the bell signaled a bull's-eye scored.

"Pshaw! that's most too much bullhead luck for any fellow to have, but when you see a bantam-legged thing like that dumpy snoozer hittin' it twice, then I think's it's time for good men to say something."

"Don't lip it so fresh; dere's an' ole washerwoman from der oder side ob town waitin' outside for yer washbill," said Shorty, getting ready for another shot.

"Short legs'll have to learn to talk polite and not throw his smart sayings round so loose, or he'll get his ears boxed," growled another of the party.

"I guess there wasn't room enough in his little carcass to put any politeness," suggested another.

"Nuder bedbug masher an' boardin-house bilk heard from," said Shorty.

"What's that you said?" demanded the young fellow that had spoken before, placing himself in front of Shorty in a threatening manner.

"I'se remarked," said Shorty, dropping the butt of his rifle on his antagonist's toes with all its force.

"Ow! ouch! darnation devils! Oh, thunder, my corns, you idiot!" yelled the young man, growing a sickly pale as he sank down on the floor and commenced hauling off his boots.

"Better fotch a wheelbarrer an' cart 'im ter som' charity free soup horsepistol," suggested Shorty, bringing up his gun and making his third bull's-eye in the midst of the confusion and excitement.

"Oh, Caesar! I believe one of my toes's broke," groaned the man on the floor.

"Well I sorter s'pose dat nine good ones an' a broken one will be 'nuff ter 'low yer ter loaf 'roun' der gin-mills an' free-lunch houses, an' if dey will dat's 'bout all yer'll want ter use dem for," said Shorty, sarcastically.

"If I thought you done that on purpose I'd clean you right out where you are," said another pugilistically inclined member of the party.

"No yer wouldn't. Why, yer wouldn't clean yer own shirt," taunted Shorty.

"I'll slap your mouth, at any rate, you grinning baboon!" exclaimed the youth, striding frantically over toward Shorty.

Our hero allowed him to approach within a few feet, then quickly but quietly dropping the loaded rifle barrel to within an inch of the youth's nose, he said, slowly and clearly:

"Crawl!"

To say the young man was taken aback was no name for it; he was thunderstruck. His eyes opened, his hair stood up, and his whole body trembled as he backed himself away from that muzzle and made for the door.

"Hol' on, dere ish seventie cents for dose drinks," said the barkeeper, collaring him as he was going out.

"Well, I guess we'll waltz if dem snoozers don't want ter look down der telescope of dat gun any more," said Shorty. And after they settled their bill they started back to the Sherman House.

CHAPTER II.

"Dem free-lunch sleepouters was rite on der fite bigger dan government jackasses, but dey weakened mitey sudden when I got der drop on 'em wid der shootin'-iron," laughed Shorty, lighting the gas and throwing himself into an easy-chair, on their return to the hotel after their racket at the shooting gallery.

"Cooled down as if some one had put icicles down their backs," replied Shanks, tilting himself back in his seat.

"Oh, I jess tumbled ter dere little game der minit dey commenced ter gib me dere chin music. I savezed dat dey owed a gin bill an' wanted ter pick a muss an' den climb out in der 'citement, but dat game didn't pan out shucks," said Shorty, blowing smoke wreaths up at the ceiling.

"I was fixing myself to lift that mussy snoozer under the ear when you took the marrow out of his backbone with that rifle," observed Shanks.

"I noticed yer edgin' roun' ter wher he was comin' for me, pard, but Ise bin a heap too long in der woods ter be scared by an owl," chuckled Shorty, opening the window and heaving his half-smoked cigar into the straw of a passing orange peddler's hand-cart, to the surprise and disgust of the peddler, as the straw catching fire, he was forced to dump his entire load of fruit into the street to prevent it being roasted.

"How did it all happen? I don't see how in the world your cart could catch fire," asked a policeman, who was helping him to gather up his fruit.

"Vell, Misder Boliceman, shust as I looks up I see wun of dose leedle dings dey calls comeds coom down inder mein card, an' der minute pefore nex de card id shust plaze ride away oup, und I sthop a leedle un ubsed my oranges inder sdreed," explained the Teutonic vender, as he darted after a youth who was filling his pockets and cap with the fruit.

"Comet hit you? Oh, that be hanged for a yarn!" exclaimed the cop.

"You dink dot dere vas nein comed, when I see id mid mein zwie eyes und nose. Maype you dinks I ish gone grazy mid mein prains," continued the peddler, growing indignant at any one doubting his word.

"How did you know it was a comet?"

"Pecause I ish nod un shackass."

"Did it have a tail?"

"How you dinks I forsta? D'yo subbose dat I stopped der ondress id?"

"Where is it now?"

"I ish sorry dot I didn't say dere ish un pig boliceman wants der know where you will be afder und leedle while, Misder Comeds."

"Pick up your oranges yourself if you're so smart. I don't believe you'd know a comet from a bologna sausage with a lighted candle stuck in one end of it," said the policeman, indignantly.

"Hello, Ike, here's an orange layout!" bawled a gutter snipe to a couple more on the other side of the street, and the next moment they were darting around like flies around a molasses hogshead, dodging the peddler and scooping in some of the

fruit when they got a show quicker than a hungry hen could gobble a grain of corn.

"Boliceman dere! Cum a leedle here mit your glub und pang dese young loavers und dhieves ober der head!" yelled the peddler, excitedly, as he gathered his fruit for a moment and then rushed frantically after one of the raiders whom he discovered getting away with an orange.

"I'm watching for another comet," answered the cop, leaning up lazily against a building with folded arms.

After a hard struggle the peddler finally got his fruit back into his cart and started on, while Shorty and Shanks, who had been amused spectators of the scene from their windows, retired inside and enjoyed a long and hearty laugh over the affair.

"What's the bill of fare for to-day?" asked Shanks next morning, as he turned himself lazily out of bed and looked at his watch.

"I ain't had my peepers open long 'nuff ter cook it," answered Shorty, popping up in bed and rubbing his eyes with the back of his hands.

"Ain't got any biz on hand?"

"Not much."

"Then what do you say to a drive? I'd like to see something of the city, and around it," said Shanks.

"K'rect, pard. After we've chucked we'll slide roun' ter some nobby stable an' get dem ter fix us up der skyrocketest, lively team he's got—sumfin' dat won't take der dust from nothin' dat caps a tail."

"Now you're shoutin' sense; that suits me all over my clothes."

"I'll jess fix up der new bill fer ter-night's show quicker dan an alligator can scoff a blue-bottle fly, an' den we'll polka off fer de hoss house," said Shorty, climbing into his clothes at a lively rate.

After a hearty breakfast Shorty called the troupe together, made the alteration in the bill, and assigned them their parts, most of which they had played before at the different cities they had visited, then, lighting cigars, Shanks and he started off to a livery stable that the hotel proprietor had directed them to.

"Want ter get a team dat can snake a wagon 'long der road 'thout lettin' der wheels touch der ground. We ain't goin' ter follow no hearse in a funeral proceshun, so yer can give us somefin' wid more red pepper, lightnin' an' snap 'bout dem dan oxen," said Shorty.

"I know just what you want, sir, and I can suit you to a dot," replied the proprietor, going out and ordering up a crack team.

"There, gemmen, if there's any stables 'round Chicago turns out any nobbier a rig than that, I'll sell out and go into the mule raising business for a living," continued the boss, as Shorty and Shanks took their seats in a light, tasty, stylish buggy, behind a pair of coal-black animals, with long tails and sweeping manes.

"Dis ain't slouchin' it 'round, 'f I knows myself! Dis is der top rung ob der style ladder—white gloves at der operay, wid a nigger tar fan yer, an' huckleberry shortcake when yer come out ain't a patch on ter a ragged boy's trousers 'long side ob dis for fun," observed Shorty, as they leaned back and admired the handsome buildings, while their team stepped as merrily and gayly along as if they spurned the ground they passed over.

They drove along Lake Michigan, in which they had an opportunity of seeing Lincoln, Union, and Lake Parks. The day was a fine one, and the boulevards leading from the business parts of the city were crowded with stylish turnouts, and sporting men dashed along behind steppers, whose gait showed them to be under three minutes. Of course Shorty wasn't slow in tackling some of them for a dash, and many were the teams that were forced to drop behind that team of blacks.

"Dere, dat 'pears ter be a nice road, an' I guess dat I'll pull

out an' let der nags hav' a chance ter get cooled off, for dey've been kitin' it like a schoolboy at nite wid a ghost after 'im," remarked Shorty, as he turned off into a cool, quiet lane and reined the horses up into a walk, while the two chums lit fresh cigars and lay off lazily.

After letting the animals loiter along and cool off for about twenty minutes or so, Shorty tightened up the ribbons and was starting ahead, when the queerest, ricketiest old turnout pulled out from behind him and undertook to pass.

"Oh, Lord, what a horse!" roared Shanks.

"Look at der waggin' an' der whole get up," replied Shorty.

The turnout in question was in reality about as hard a looking turnout as could be scared up. The horse was a tall, long skeleton, with a mouse-colored hide dragged over his bones, but leaving them all showing as clearly and plainly as rungs in a ladder; his head hung down and his ears drooped forward as if he was dead. About seven straggling brown hairs adorned a stump of a tail, which he kept twitching nervously; in fact this pendulum of a tail was all that showed he was alive. This bony quadruped was harnessed by means of a combination of rope and straps to a wagon, which was composed of a dry goods box sawed down and fastened upon the lower part of a buggy; in this ramshackly old affair a little, weasened, sun-browned old man was seated driving.

"Well, that takes the starch out of my collar for rigs; why, they oughtn't to allow such a feeble old bone yard of a horse to be driven; it's cruelty to animals, besides I'll bet the whole thing'll fall to pieces before it goes half a mile," said Shanks.

"Well, I guess dat we won't wait an' take his dust for dat half mile," said Shorty, pulling to one side and chirruping to his pair of blacks, who dashed forward, but, strange to say, failed to pass the skeleton steed, for as they came abreast the weasened driver suddenly jerked up his rope reins, and the boneyard lifting up his long neck, slowly struck out at a gait that astonished Shorty and Shanks nearly out of their senses, and threatened to shake the rickety old wagon and weasened old driver to pieces.

"By George! the skeleton's come to life, and he knows how to move, too," remarked Shanks, as the bony nag went ahead.

"Well, if dat bunch ob bones can't skin it, an' I ain't der wuss fooled clam in der puddle, yer can shoot me wid boiled beans; but one ting sartain, it won't do arter passin' an' beatin' all der big bugs' teams ter go hom' an' 'knowledge ter havin' had ter swallow der dust ob dat ol' frame," said Shorty, as he urged his team to fresh efforts.

Side by side they would fly, Shorty by word and whip encouraging his mettled steeds, who fairly flew as if they knew that their master was eager to win. Then, just as Shorty and Shanks would fancy themselves gaining a little, the weasened old fellow would smile a sickly smile, tug the rope reins, and the skeleton plug would make his long, bony legs stretch out over the road, carrying him once more to the front.

"Tain't no use, an' it's too darned hard on der nags; we're beat an' may's well 'knowledge der corn, for it don't lay in dis pair of horses' skins ter get away wid dat ole boneyard. If dat ol' feller dere hasn't taken more conceit out of dis shawl-pin dan dere's meat ter an egg, den yer can peg me ter death wid rotten apples. He picked me up so fresh, I bit so gulp-ingly, an' arter he played me for a flat till he was tired, he's gone off laffin' in his sleeve," said Shorty, pulling up his excited and flying steeds, and letting the old man go to the front.

"Horse! Why, that horse would fool the d—l with a pair of spectacles on—if he is a horse. I'll be hanged if I don't believe he's some kind of a frame that you work by electricity or steam. The idea of an old bunch of bones that you can read a paper through, and who looks as if all he wanted in the world was a place to lay down and die in, getting up suddenly, shaking his skinny old carcass together and beating one of the fastest teams in Chicago," grumbled Shanks, who felt as sore as a boil over being beaten, and was chewing his cigar as savagely as if it was the weasened old driver's bones.

"D'yer know what I'm goin' ter do, pard?" asked Shorty, after a pause.

"No," said Shanks, tersely.

"Well, I'm goin' ter foller dat ol' snoozer home an' I'm jess goin' ter buy dat ol' skeleton if dere's 'nuff money in der treasury of der New York Minstrels."

"Buy that ghost of a horse?"

"Yes, der whole rig."

"What—wagon and all?"

"Yee-up."

"Going to exhibit it with the troupe?"

"Ise goin' ter drive dat skin an' bones plug away wid a pile of dese Chicago ham's dingbads an' Ise goin' ter gib der minstrels a good puff dat'll fill der house chock full, while we're 'ere. D'yer tumble now?" said Shorty.

"I smell a big-sized rat. I guess we won't be the only ones sold in horseflesh," answered Shanks.

"I tink dat we can scoop in a pile of stamps, hav' a high cock-a-doodle of a racket, an' tak' der starch out of som' of dese sports dat 'lows dat dey boss der road."

"Lordy! Why, there ain't a clam peddler 'round the city but'll bet you all he's worth he can beat that crow-bait," laughed Shanks.

"Ise goin' ter trot 'im on der course 'fl can get 'im, but I'll bet dat dried up old strawberry dat was drivin' 'im is jess as sharp as barbers' razors or a March wind, an' knows jess as well what dat nag can do as der best jockey dat ever held a rein," said Shorty.

"Shouldn't wonder if needle points were dull to him."

"Well, if he wants spondulicks an's willin' ter let me hav' der boneyard in s'change, dere's goin' ter be a trade. Hello! dere he's turnin' inter his shanty; looks like der rest of der get up, don't it?"

The farm was a narrow, long strip of poor, sandy land, fenced in with a thin brush fence that seemed to hang together for support, and which the weight of a small bird would hopelessly wreck.

The house was tall as a flag-pole and thin as a postage stamp, and to one corner of it had been fixed a barn and stable of the same lean character as the rest of the things.

The old fellow, who was busy unharnessing, scarcely raised his eyes when Shorty drove up.

"Pretty fast hoss, dat," said Shorty, opening the conversation.

"A leetle spry, stranger, thaats all," answered the old fellow, speaking as if his words and his chew of tobacco had got mixed up.

"What makes him so thin?"

"Wal, stranger, he's naterly a lean sort of hoss, an', yeou see, when the times is so hard, why we've all got to eat a heap less than we used to."

"Den, mebbe, yer wouldn't mind sellin' 'im. Der fac' is, I've taken a notion dat I'd like ter buy der whole rig. Now, what do yer say ter sell it?" asked Shorty, coming down to business.

"Wal, yeou kneow, stranger, that though he ain't so pretty as he might be, still he can skin them all when he moves."

"What d'yer say ter two hundred cash for der rig?" inquired Shorty.

"Wal, I guess not."

"Two hundred and fifty?"

"Neow, stranger."

"Three hundred, ready money?"

"Times is tuff, but I guess I'll keep my hoss for awhile longer."

"Three hundred and fifty?"

The old man shook his weazened-up face and let fly a volley of tobacco juice at a thin, starved hen that was passing, nearly knocking her off her feet.

"Four hundred?"

"Yeou see, stranger, we're all used to the old hoss's looks, and I think we ortent to part."

"Will yer take four hundred an' fifty?"

"The hoss mayn't be worth all that money, but then——"

"I'll giv' yer five hundred, slap down, an' yer can buy half a dozen bustin' good plugs for dat much sugar," said Shorty, interrupting him.

"One's 'bout all that I can 'ford to keep, an' this one we've got trained deown so ekonomikel that he don't eat more than a chicken," aiming another shot of tobacco juice at the hen, but missing badly.

"Five hundred an' fifty square Yankee dollars—what d'yer say ter dat, little hoss fly?"

"Carn't take it, stranger."

"What, or how much in thunder d'yer want for yer plug an' rattletrap of a wagon wid dem ol' ropes an' straps bobbin' 'round for harness?"

"Wal, stranger, yeou see we wasn't thinkin' 'bout sellin' just yet," cackled the old fellow, cunningly, as he squinted out of the corners of his eyes at Shorty.

"Yer can hav' six hundred if yer want it, an' if yer don't, jess git up at oncet an' say yer won't, an' how much yer do ax."

"Hain't dercided yet, stranger, becorse I'll 'leow that six hundred dollars is a pretty high figur fur that are critter; when yeou stand off and leook at him, but when yeou get to kneow him, yeou'd be surprised what that same old hoss kneows and what he can do. Why, stranger, that old animal ceould hev trotted jest twice as quick as he dun if I'd wanted teu let him go," continued the old fellow, picking up a thin splinter of pine and picking his sharp, rat-like teeth with it.

"Six hundred and fifty—giv yer a check on a bank in der city," offered Shorty.

"Tain't the money I keer so much 'bout, though the times is awfully tuff, but you see——"

"Oh, him be hanged!" exclaimed Shanks, losing all patience with the weazened old leech.

"Seven hundred, an' dat's der top peg; yer can tak' or leave it, I don't care a clam; I ain't goin' ter stop all day here jawin' 'bout a hoss."

"He's yeourn, sir."

"Dat's biz; now I want yer ter keep 'im for me for a week. I'll pay yer all der board yer want ter charge, an' I don't want yer ter let on 'bout sellin' 'im; com' rite in ter-morrer ter der Sherman House, an' ax fur Shorty. an' yer money'll be all O K fer yer; now tak' good care of der whole rig for me till I see yer agin," directed Shorty, and having given him a hundred dollars to bind the bargain, they drove off toward the city.

"Well, you've got your boneyard at real estate prices," laughed Shanks, when they were once more on the road.

"I'd made up my mind ter have 'im, an' I'd have give two thousand but I'd have had 'im," said Shorty.

"Oh, I ain't grumblin', pard, only I'm 'fraid the cussed old frame'll die 'fore we can get a chance to trot him," said Shanks.

On their way back they dropped into one of the famous road hotels, the rooms of which were crowded by the sports and bigbugs of the city owning fast teams, who were drinking wine, smoking the best cigars, and blowing about the speed of their horses.

"Dat's der spot where I'll scare up a match ter-morrer," said Shorty, after they had some wine and fresh cigars.

"Yes, they're on the sport there every time."

"Yer'd better get a rig ter-morrer afternoon an' com' out 'ere. I'll drive down ter der ole man's, change my rig, get into some other wraps, an' come back ter der hotel wid der ole skeleton. I must try an' skin all der loose money I can raise 'fore den," continued Shorty, and shortly after they entered the city, drove to the livery stable, and walked around to the hotel.

"Course, chum, dis t'ing's got ter be dead mum twixt yer an' I. I ain't goin' ter let der rest of der gang into it till der las' minit," explained Shorty.

"I'm a dumby. By the way, pard, I'll telegraph for a draft," replied Shanks.

The next afternoon, just as the crowd of sports were thickest around the sporting hotel on the road, and the sheds were filled with some of Chicago's fastest steppers, Shorty, dressed in a rusty, half-worn suit, drove the skeleton steed up to the door amidst shouts of laughter.

"I want some of yer stablemen ter kinder keep an eye on Barebones, 'cause he's sorter kittenish when he's 'way from hom'," said Shorty, fastening him to a tree and going indoors, where he was speedily a butt for everybody to cod.

"Is that horse of yours fast, Shortboy?" asked a dandyish sport.

"Yer bet yer glass eyes he's fas'. Why, der las' funeral dad was at, we was der fust to der grave; beat der hearse, an' all der mourners. How's dat for scootin'?" answered Shorty, innocently.

"Well, I'll bet a cool thousand that there ain't a thing 'round these parts I can't beat in a mile dash with my gray horse, Lightning," said a sport, who appeared to be a power amongst them, and he leaned back against the mantelpiece.

"Dat's stiff talk," said Shorty, coming over to where he was standing. "'Bout what odds would yer giv an' trot a mile 'gainst ol' Barebones?"

A shout of laughter went up at the very idea of the old battered frame, that was tied to the tree outside, trotting against Mr. Winall's famous trotter.

"Oh, go 'way, farmer; don't make yourself ridiculous. Why, my horse is a trained trotter, and one of the fastest in Chicago," answered Mr. Winall.

"Well, Barebones ain't 'zactly a trained trotter; but I'll put up 'bout three hundred of Uncle Sammy's picturs dat yer can't beat 'im much ter der mile," said Shorty, pulling out a big leather wallet.

"He's drunk!"

"Take him up, Winall; you might as well go home three hundred richer as not," advised some of his friends.

"It's just about a mile from Hudson's Hotel, above here, to this place, and I won't say I'll beat you half way in, but I'll bet the thousand against your three hundred, and put the money up if you want to, that I'll beat you so bad you won't be in sight hardly by the time we reach here," said Winall, after going out and having a look at Shorty's shackely old turnout.

"Dat's a go," said Shorty, putting his stake up in the proprietor's hands. "Mebbe dere's som' more sports 'round here dat wants ter scoop in som' money, for dere's a little more lef' in der ol' pocketbook."

"I'll bet you a thousand more on the same odds," said Winall, confidently.

"I'll bet you a couple of thousand 'gainst six hundred."

"Well, I guess dat I'se riskin' too much of der ol' man's money; I'se not so dead sure 'bout Barebones as I ort ter be," said Shorty, doubtfully, and the next moment they were offering ten to one against him, which he quietly accepted, while Shanks in another part of the room was picking up all the long odds that were offered.

A starter, judges and parties to keep the road as clear as they could having been chosen, Mr. Winall and Shorty started away for the starting point, the appearance of the latter's turnout setting everybody off into fits of laughter, while the jokes that were passed at Shorty's expense would have filled a two-volume book.

The course over which they were to trot was a straight, level dash of good road, starting from in front of Hudson's Hotel and ending in the centre of Stevenson's Sporting House, from which they had just departed.

Winall, who had dashed off with his gray trotter was at the starting point and waiting some ten or fifteen minutes before Shorty trundled up.

"You'll have to make better time than that, Shortbones, if

you want to get back in time to see me leaving for home," he said, on Shorty's appearance.

"Der race ain't ober yet by a long chalk," replied Shorty, as he drove down and turned, coming back side by side with Winall's horse.

"Go!" yelled the starter.

"Good-bye, boneyard," exclaimed Winall, slapping his fleet-footed gray with the reins.

"Mebbe I'll see yer agin 'fore we're thro' wid der dig," said Shorty, jerking the old rope lines, and old Barebones, as if he knew what was up, picked up his head, cocked his ears, and slinging out his long, thin legs, whirled the old rickety wagon up side by side with Winall's fancy turnout, to that gentleman's intense astonishment.

"G'lang! Geet up! W-h-a-t you doing there?" yelled Winall, tapping his gray horse with the whip as he fairly flew over the road.

"Go it, Bones," chuckled Shorty, slapping the old frame with the lines, and laughing aloud to see him take his place and keep it alongside of Winall's "Lightning."

Side by side they had dashed for nearly three-quarters of a mile; sometimes the gray, urged on by his driver, who saw not only a loss of money, but himself the laughing stock of Chicago, would forge slightly ahead, but the next moment the gaunt head of Barebones would loom up at the front.

"Any message yer want ter send ahead ter dem fellers, I'll tote fer yer. Kase it won't do ter fool 'long this way any longer," said Shorty, shaking his reins and giving a few sharp yelps at his bony plug, who shook himself together, cocked up his ears, wagged his hairless tail, and striking out with his thin legs, he carried Shorty several lengths to the front, and brought him in the winner by some forty odd feet.

"Great Je-hos-ophat! what a sell. I'm going home," was all Winall said, and he drove off.

"Who in blazes are you, boy?" asked another, who had been pretty badly stuck.

"I'se Shorty, ob der New York Minstrels, dat's who I is at present," chuckled our little friend, as he rolled up a wad of bills and stuffed them in his pocket.

"That's enough. That lets me out. I've often heard of Shorty and his rackets, and now I've seen him to the tune of a couple of thousand," said the other, going in after a drink.

"Pretty solid old roast this; you've soaked them for all that's out. We've made as pretty a little haul of wealth out of this as a feller cares about having around his clothes," said Shanks, after they were alone. "Now, first thing, what are you going to do with the turnout?"

"I've thort of dat an' telergrafed ter a friend in 'Frisco, an' I guess we'll ship 'im on dere by der railroad; he'll go safe 'nuff. I'll send some good man 'long ter take care of 'im, an' I tink we can catch some of der fellers on dere snoozin'," replied Shorty, and they returned to the city shortly afterwards.

Shorty's horse race racket soon became the talk of the city, and full houses greeted the company nightly during their stay, and it was with extreme regret that the Chicago boys bade them good-bye on their departure for Milwaukee at the close of their engagement.

CHAPTER III.

The trip between Chicago and Milwaukee proved a quiet and uneventful one. The troupe amused themselves chinning, reading the papers, playing cards, and snoozing, as they felt in the humor, and no one was sorry when the conductor announced Milwaukee in a tone of voice loud enough to have answered for New York.

At the depot was the usual array of hacks, profanity, dirty-faced children, whips shouting, baggage-wagons, bewilderment, bundles, omnibuses, hurry, and shoved-about passengers.

After yelling himself hoarse, Shorty made a Teutonic driver of a stage understand that his party were not Bashi Bazouks, and that they desired to be driven to the Plankinton House, where rooms had been secured them by their advance agent.

Arriving, after a short drive through the "Cream City," at the hotel, they were warmly welcomed by the proprietor.

"So you're the famous New York Minstrel troupe that beat the Our Boys Club of Louisville. I suppose, though, you got hold of a muffin nine; they don't amount to much on the ball play, do they?" remarked the landlord, as they registered their names.

"Very good club," said Shorty, tersely, and the conversation dropped.

The company opened at the Academy of Music to a good house. Everything worked well from the rising to the final dropping of the curtain. The troupe were as funny as ever, and provoked the house into roars of laughter with their comicalities. Dave Reed's songs and dances were encored, and Shorty, as usual, capped the climax and stirred the audience into rounds of cheers by his banjo performance and outlandish remarks. The people, even way out in Wisconsin, had heard of him and his rackets, and welcomed him warmly to their midst, while the boy portion of his audience testified their delight by loud and continuous clapping of hands.

"Hey, Shorty, how 'bout dat base ball match wid de Our Boys Club?" yelled an urchin from the gallery.

"Oh, we got away wid dem, kid," answered Shorty, picking up his banjo and trotting off the stage.

"Well, pard, what do you say to Milwaukee?" asked Shanks, as they walked home after the performance.

"Dere's plenty of beer an' yaller brick," said Shorty.

"Well, let's go in here and throw in some of the first, for I'm as dry as a graven image," said Shanks, leading the way into a large beer hall, which they found full of people just out from the minstrel show.

"I tell you, fellows, that Shorty would make a tombstone laugh. I wonder if he's the same chap that beat that Louisville nine at baseball?" observed one of the bystanders, as he blew the froth from his foaming lager.

"Yes, he's the same coon; but I hear Our Boys Club here say it wasn't anything more than a muffin' game at the best."

Shorty said nothing, and a few minutes afterwards, having finished their lager, they returned to the hotel and retired.

A couple of evenings later, as they were coming out of a sporting club house, Shanks suddenly asked:

"What in thunder were them fellows hinting around about anybody winning muff games?"

"Oh, dem's a lot of perfeshunals ball-tossers wid a sprinklin' of der Our Boys Club throwed in, an' dey was only squealin' an' 'sinuating dat der game we played in Louisville was a snide 'fair,'" answered Shorty.

"Maybe they wouldn't think it so snide if they should tackle us," suggested Shanks.

"Pshaw! Haven't yer tumbled ter der slurs an' back talk dat I've been gettin' ever since we struck Chicago? De Our Boys Club of dat town giv' me some fearful back-caps, but I scooped 'em an' said nixy, an' now der Our Boys of Milwaukee dey've got an idea dat I'se scared ter say beans, an' dat's jess where dey're fryin' a large-sized beefsteak," explained Shorty, reaching up and touching a pompous, red-nosed man on the nose with his cane.

"Hey! hello!" D—n it, fellow! What're doing?" exclaimed the pompous party, starting back and clapping his hand to his nose.

"Beg pardon, sir, thort it was a litenin' bug," said Shorty, dodging out of the way of the old fellow's stick and mixing with the people on the street.

"Then you've got a half-way idea of tackling one of these boss clubs before you're through with them?" asked Shanks when he rejoined his mischievous and prank-playing little chum.

"I dunno yet, pard; but dere's one t'ing dat's as sartin as dat der Lord made sparrergass an' little faters, an' dat is dat dey

ain't goin' ter keep a-shovin' dis blowhard biz down dis chick's throat wid a crooked stick. Der Our Boys of Milwaukee may be a rippin' good nine an' I know dey is; dey may sling a nasty bat, toss a litenin' ball an' play fieldin' up ter de handle, but for all dat dey don't own a rooster dat can flop an' crow ober der New York Minstrels when Shorty's 'round widout dey show der size of dere spurs. Savey?"

The next morning while they were sitting at breakfast Shorty opened a copy of "Snaps," which had just arrived by the morning's mail, and, after glancing over it for a few moments, read aloud:

"A GRAND BASEBALL CONTEST.

"\$100 prize offered by the editor of 'Snaps' to the winning club
—Our Boys' Club, of Milwaukee, against any
amateur club in the West."

"That's the music. Talk's cheap, but hundred-dollar greenbacks counts every pop!" exclaimed Shanks enthusiastically.

"Yer head's 'bout level, pard. It ain't ebbery boss dat's slingin' dose green century plants 'round so loose and careless. 'Snaps' sticks up der stamps for its readers ter play for, you bet. Now, chum, we'll jess try an' scoop in dat stamp for der boys. I'll speak ter der ol' nine rite away arter chuck, and den I'll mak' it my biz ter drop in wher' der Snaps gang hang out an' listen ter dere jawin'," said Shorty, sipping his coffee meditatively.

"That's what suits me. We can commence practicing to-day, and as we've got our rigs all as good as new, it won't take us no time to get in shape; so if you'll scratch up the match, we'll do our level best," replied Shanks.

"I'll fix it if dere's any fix ter it, an' I t'ink dey've got der idea dat dey can whitewash our gang," said Shorty, rising from the table and strolling into the smoking room, where he found most of the company smoking, chinning and reading the papers, and calling his old Louisville nine off by themselves, Shorty explained the whole affair to them, told them of the sneers of the Chicago clubs and the hints of the Milwaukee nine; of the insinuations of "crooked playing" that had been heard, of the liberal and handsome prize offered by the "Snaps" library of New York and of his proposed visit and challenge of the Our Boys' Club, of Milwaukee, for the prize and championship.

"Go for them bald-headed, little boss. Challenge them; don't take no slack, don't back water, an' I'll speak for the nine in saying that we'll stick to your back and play ball for all that's in the game," answered Dave Reed enthusiastically, and the rest cordially and heartily seconded him.

"Want to pick us up for a hay-bag nine from the country, do they?" asked Tambo.

"Maybe they won't have such a soft gum-drop to suck when they meet us on the diamond," laughed Bones.

"Specially if Shorty gets to knocking any more of those out-of-the-world sockdologing home-rum balls," said Dave.

"To say nothing of scooping in the hundred dollars. I tell you, boys, that'd buy a pile of lager at five cents a schooner," remarked the left field.

"Well, den, boys, dat settles it. I'll skip out now, skim downtown an' see what I can do wid dat oder gang," said Shorty, going out on his mission.

"I believe that this Our Boys' nine, of Milwaukee, are heavy weather fellows at the fielding biz," observed Dave.

"And you can bet your highmuckymuck that they're going to do their prettiest to keep the championship, pocket the prize money and send us off with a flea in our ear," chimed in the right field.

"Yes, but the New York Minstrels ain't taking fleas in their ears this time," said an active little fellow who played third base in the nine.

"Korreet, spelt with a K. If Shorty makes this match, boys, I'm going to play to win. That's the kind of a soup-plate I am," said Dave.

"And if you catch me fumbling any balls you can cut me up for geese bait. That's the kind of a folding step-ladder I am," said Shanks, sticking his long legs up against the mantel-piece.

"And if I don't curve and twist the balls for them till they get puzzled I'm ready to be kicked by mules. That's the kind of an oyster stew I am," remarked the pitcher.

"If I play first base, and you fellows will only put them into me red hot, and if I don't freeze to them if they're hotter than fire, you can call me a butter-fingers. That's the kind of a pickle-bottle I am," said Dave Reed.

In the meantime Shorty had got under his hat, lit a fresh cigar and rambled off down Wisconsin street till he came to a club-room, where he knew he would strike some of the crowd he was looking for.

"Hello, Shorty," said the captain of the Our Boys' nine as he entered; "I hear that in that game you played wid dem Louisville muffs you used a football so as your fellows could see to catch it."

"If fellers played ball wid dere moufs what a boss nine you'd be der captain of, wouldn't yer?" retorted Shorty, coolly.

"Oh, we don't catch balls with one hand and eat ham sandwiches with the other up in this town," said the catcher of the club, who was sorting a euchre hand.

"No, I guess dat yer don't catch dem wid elder han' 'roun' 'ere, duff bags."

"Did you hear about the one hundred-dollar prize that the 'Snaps' library has put up for any club that can beat us?" asked the captain. "But I was just telling the fellows that I guess we will have the fun of dividing it around among ourselves, for there ain't any club around these parts that dares to tackle Our Boys' Club of Milwaukee."

"Oh, yes dere am," said Shorty, quietly.

"Where are they? I'd like to see them."

"Oh, dey're rite 'ere in dis yaller city."

"What's their names?" demanded the captain, skeptically.

"Well, I don't know 's I've got any rite ter tell more'n one, but I guess dat'll satisfy yer."

"What club is it then that wants to toe the home plate against us?"

"Der New York Minstrel Nine am yer clams for one, an' arter dat we'll see an' talk somfin' more 'bout dat muffin' at Louisville," spoke up Shorty.

"Pshaw! yer're joking. Better go practice wid stuffed clubs and codfish balls and leave well enough alone," sneered the Our Boys captain.

"Say, Captain Beetlebug, yer jes wipe off yer chin, an' don't swim out ober yer head. Der New York Minstrel Nine don't weaken worth a cent. We savey dat you've got a humpin' good old club, but if yer want ter play us say der word an' drop 'chawin' a rag.'"

"Why, confound it, Shorty, we'll goose-egg you, and what'll dey say in New York when they see the score of the game?" asked the captain.

"I guess when dey see der score dey'll say: 'By George! dere's Shorty an' his gang scooped in dat blowhard Milwaukee nine an' der hundred dollars easy as rollin' off a log,'" answered Shorty, laughingly.

"Then you're really in earnest about playing?"

"Sure as rats has tails."

"When will you be ready to meet us?"

"Der day arter ter-morrer, if yer say der word," said Shorty.

"All right, we'll play you. But I'll tell you one thing, Shorty, right here; you'll be the sickest old club that ever left Milwaukee after we're through with you. You'll find you haven't got hold of any such soft snap as the Louisvilles were," remarked the Our Boys captain positively.

"Give us a breeze. Yer ought ter get yer head fanned. Lem-me tell yer dat der New York hams is got pow'ful sound an' tough constitushuns an' don't get sick when dey hear a feller blow. So yer can depend on us bein' on der ground at three sharp," replied Shorty, getting up and inviting all hands to a general smile and smoke, after which he took his departure and hastened back to the hotel, where he found all the boys eagerly and anxiously awaiting his coming.

"Well! well! well! well!" was the general exclamation from all sides the moment our hero entered the room.

"How many wells make a river? Boys, it's all hunky dory, O K doodledum!" laughed Shorty, perching himself on a corner of the table. "Der match is fixed, an' der Our Boys gang threatens ter kerwollop der New York Minstrels out of their boots an' socks."

"When 're they going to do all this?"

"Der day arter ter-morrer at three der show opens. Ebery-ting is fixed, an' now, fellers, le's jess put in a little ole der tallest ole practicin' dat we eber thort of. Dem oder fellers t'ink dey've got a reg'lar ole puddin' of a layout on us, an' I want ter fool 'em so bad dat dey'll t'ink der duyvul's broke loose an' got hol' on 'em," said Shorty, and a few minutes later the nine set off for a practice ground, where they spent their time up till the dinner hour. In the afternoon they were out and at it again,

and the next morning's sun wasn't out much before the boys were. Every man felt within himself a burning desire to win and was determined that no effort of his should be spared to attain that end. Of course with such a united feeling success is half way won. Shorty, in his shirt sleeves, and with the perspiration standing in beads on his comical old face, worked like a beaver, stopping "hot balls" fresh from the "stick" with a coolness and contempt for blisters perfectly amazing. Shanks as catcher was here, there and everywhere that a ball was likely to drop, his long legs and arms enabling him to gobble balls that nine catchers out of ten would have let slide; but the great chalk in his favor was his accurate throwing. Without a second's hesitation he would snatch a foul tip and send the ball into the second baseman's hands as accurately as if it had been fired out of a rifle.

"Dere, boys," said Shorty, as they were putting on their coats on the evening of their last practice day. "I tell yer dat dere club dat can bat heavier balls, pick 'em up quicker, field dem home sooner an' make less fumbelin' wid der ball dan dis gang can ort ter have der prize, but I don't t'ink dere's any drove of hossflies 'round dis city dat's able to do it."

The afternoon of the match found the Milwaukee ball grounds crowded with an eager, anxious and good-humored crowd. Shorty, with an eye ever to business, had papered the fences and billboards with posters announcing the great match, and as the Our Boys' Club was looked upon as invincible, the Milwaukeeans turned out en masse to see the strangers taken in and done for.

Each nine was cheered when they left their dressing-rooms and put in an appearance and the looks of the different players criticised and commented upon.

"They're darned well matched as far as the men goes, but hear my gentle voice, that Shorty feller is boss of his nine. He knows what every man he's got can do, and he's going to put them just where they'll do it, and there won't be no grumbling 'bout it. Now there's just nine captains in the Our Boys' nine, and that's why I'm going to stick my little pile right on runty and his new New York gang," said an old gray-mustached sport to a confidential friend after watching the nines critically.

An umpire was chosen, and the captains, having tossed for innings, Shorty announced the result with:

"New York, take your places in the field."

"Play!" said the umpire a moment later, when the men had taken their places and the great prize contest was opened.

Hardly had the word passed his lips when, swift as a cannon-ball, yet full of twists, flew the ball from the pitcher's hands, to be snatched by Shanks as if it was a passing feather and returned. A second ball, swifter even than the first followed, and the striker, striking at it, was surprised to see it spin up in the air and come down in Shanks' outstretched paws.

"He pitches like twisted lightning," remarked the victim as he joined his comrades.

There was a visible rustle among the crowd as the next striker, a tall, heavily-built, broad-shouldered young fellow advanced to the home-plate and yells from his friends and acquaintances of "Bust her, Hank!"

"Show dose fellers what yer can do."

"Give it a corker."

"I'll bet he makes his second on the hit!"

"Paste it, Hank!"

"One-ob der heavy hitters," mused Shorty, and by a motion perceptible only to his own nine, he motioned his fielders to lay out and be watchful.

Shorty was right. He proved a heavy hitter, sending the ball clear over into the extreme left field, amid the cheers of the crowd.

"Make your second!" yelled his captain as the man started to run. But he changed his mind when he saw that it was all the man could do to reach first base, so rapidly was the ball fielded in.

Striker number three sent a daisy cutter in Shorty's direction, who picked it up, put it in red hot to Dave Reed, on first, and Dave, wheeling, sent in humming to second base in time to make a double play and wind up half of the inning.

"Bet a tenner the New Yorkers don't make a run," exclaimed a flashily dressed gentleman.

"I'm your man. Bet you a hundred, if you want to, that they will," said the old gray-mustached sport, who had pinned his confidence on the Shorty nine, and was backing it right and left with his money.

One of the fielders went first to the bat on the New Yorkers' side and went out on a foul tip. Shanks followed, and, throwing all his nervous energy and force into his stroke, he sent the ball whistling down into centre field, and by the active use of his long legs managed to reach his second base amid the applause of the crowd. Dave Reed followed, making a one-base hit, and letting Shanks down to his third, from where he was brought home by a corker knocked by Shorty, who took his first, stole his second on a fumbled ball and came home flying

on a safe ball batted by Tambo, and the inning closed with three runs scored.

"Come, fellows, we've caught a tartar, and I tell you we've got to play up or we'll get waxed right here on our own dunghill," observed Our Boys' shortstop as he fanned himself with his cap.

"Sugar! You boys talk like children. Because that crowd manage to scratch a couple of runs you think we've got our match. Why, we'll beat them three to one yet," snapped the captain, selecting a bat with scrupulous care and taking his place.

"I'm not betting, but I guess the captain'll find out that it looks a pile more like us getting soaked three to one," mumbled the little shortstop.

"Low ball," said the captain.

"Low ball!" repeated the umpire.

Two or three low balls were pitched before the captain found one to suit him. At last a low-curved beauty came toward him, and raising his bat he sent it flying high over the head of Shorty, who jumped for it, only to fall into the hands of the second baseman, who made a magnificent running catch amid tumultuous applause.

"Darnation! Why don't them fellows play all over the field at once," muttered the captain, sulkily.

"Seems to me they're doing it pretty well," replied the shortstop as he took up his "willow" and trotted off for a crack at the ball, but going out on a foul neatly taken by Shanks, number three batting a fly which was scooped in by the left field.

In the second innings the New Yorkers were retired in one, two, three order.

The third and fourth innings were a continuation of the blank business, neither party scoring.

In the fifth inning, when the Our Boys' Club had three on bases, Shorty made a magnificent catch, throwing himself in the way of a red-hot ball fresh from the bat. He snatched it in his right hand, sent it to first, who in turn passed it to third, making a capital double play and causing an immense crowd of spectators to cheer them to the echo.

The sixth inning was a blank for both sides.

In the seventh, by heavy batting, two runs were made by the Our Boys' Club amid the wildest cheering and shouting of their friends in the crowd.

One, two, three was the order in which the New York Minstrel Nine were disposed of, and the eighth inning commenced with a score of three to two in favor of the New Yorkers.

The captain of the Our Boys' Club led off with a heavy hit to right field, which gave him his first. The shortstop sent a safe liner that let the captain to second and himself to first; then came their heaviest batter, and with a tremendous hit to left field, he sent the captain home, tying the game amid the wildest applause. Two flies and a foul caught disposed of the team and left the game three to three.

The New Yorkers failed to get in a chalk in their inning, and the ninth inning came on with a tie.

"Two to one—one hundred to fifty on the New Yorkers and their short-legged captain, if it flattens me out worse than a turtle," sang out the old, gray-mustached sport, game to the backbone.

One of the Our Boys' safest hitters took the stick and batted a nice ball that gave him his first by shinning lively.

Another good striker followed, and sent the ball humming into the outer field and himself on to first base, the other fellow having climbed to second.

Shorty glanced around the field as he saw the broad-shouldered young fellow that had opened the ball toe the plate. Every man was in his place, bent forward and almost holding their breaths to see the result of the hit.

"Soak her!"

"Knock the stuffing out of it, Hank!"

"He's the boy can do it!"

"Knock it out of sight!" yelled the crowd.

Hank struck at the third or fourth ball, hit it fair, and it flew straight from the bat to the front as if it had been shot from a gun. The little pitcher saw it coming, knew it was his great opportunity to save the day, and, fearful as the force was, he jumped for it, snatched it, and though it threw him to the ground with frightful force, the game little fellow rolled over and sent it in to Dave Reed on first in time to let him put it to third, putting out two men.

Maybe, boys, the crowd didn't cheer and yell their applause at the plucky little fellow's grit and play.

The third man of Our Boys Nine went out on a foul tip, and the New Yorkers came in to close the last inning amid the most intense excitement.

Shanks drove a ball high over right field's head and made his second base, and Shorty following and getting a ball to suit him, socked it, sending it to the extreme limit of the field, bringing Shanks in and winning the game, the next three strikers batting out in one, two, three order.

"Three cheers for the New York Club!" proposed an old gentleman, and they were given with a vengeance.

"I knew Shorttail and his gang were the correct card and I stuck up every dollar I had in the world on them, and they're just the gamest, toughest, pluckiest little nine that ever tossed a ball," said the old gray-mustached sport as he raked in his ducats.

"Three hearty New York cheers and a Bengal tiger for the Our Boys Club of Milwaukee!" proposed Shorty, and the boys gave them in a way and with a vim that only New York boys can give.

Of course Shorty and his party found themselves the heroes of the hour. A banquet was given to them and their nightly performances were packed to a sardine-box degree, while hundreds were unable to get within the doors.

The hundred-dollar prize was promptly handed over to Shorty by the "Snaps" library agent at the conclusion of the game, and Shorty, after handing a tenner of it to the umpire, gave each of his players a like sum, except the little pitcher, to whom he handed over twenty, adding his own ten to the pile.

"If it was twenty thousand it wouldn't be a cent too big for der grit yer showed in snatchin' dat decidin' ball, bald-headed little feller," he said as he handed the money to him.

But the days flew around, and as time and horse-car conductors wait for no one, the New Yorkers found themselves once more on the pack up and travel, having an engagement at San Francisco.

There was the usual handshaking, good-byes and parting schooners of Milwaukee beer before the train rolled out of the depot, bound for the Pacific.

CHAPTER IV.

We left our mischievous little friend, Shorty, and his party on the train, leaving Milwaukee for San Francisco.

"Der fust t'ing we'd best do, fellers, is ter 'point a committee ter take a spin thro' der train an' snatch on ter der best layout for seats dat dey can drop on, for I tell yer dis is no bob-tail hoss-car ride yer takin' dis pop," remarked Shorty, after they had changed cars and were bumping over the Western Union Railroad toward Iowa.

Reaching Iowa, another transfer of cars took place, and they sped through that State on the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, connecting at Omaha, Nebraska, with the Union Pacific Railroad, which was to convey them across the continent.

Having a few hours at their disposal before the departure of the train, our party availed themselves of it to stretch their legs and see the city. Strolling slowly through one of the streets, they suddenly found themselves face to face with a group of Pawnee Indians, a peaceable tribe having several lodges outside of the city.

"Injuns, by hokey!" exclaimed Shorty, clapping his hands to his scalp in such a comical manner that everybody laughed.

"Ugh, boy man!" grunted one of the Indians.

"What in the name of Pocahontas are they, men or women?" asked Dave Reed, looking at their strange mixture of blankets, leggings, skirts and flat faces.

"Why can't you see they're squaws by their looks and dress. You don't expect you'd find one of the male Indians loafing around a city, do you?" answered Shanks.

"I t'ink dey're very dirty an' a heap more lik' robbin' a hen-house dan scalpin' a sick cat," remarked Shorty.

Shanks in the meantime had singled out the tallest, ugliest, sleepest and dirtiest one and in a conciliatory voice remarked:

"What tribe Injun from?"

"Pawnee."

"Likee whitey man muchy?" inquired Shanks.

"Humph; gimme ten cents."

"Got many papposes in lodgey?" asked Shanks as he handed his copper-skinned acquaintance over the requested sum.

"Ugh, so much," replied the Indian, holding up half a dozen fingers.

"Six papposes; good squaw; nice squaw——"

"Me squaw! U—g—h?" demanded the Indian fiercely, winding his grimy and nigrous blanket around his dirty, ragged person.

"Y—es. Why a-a-in't you a s-squaw, y-you know?" stammered Shanks, while a broad smile commenced to walk upstairs over the faces of the troupe.

"U—g—h! me no squaw; me buck, me brave—me Kiokiwashiki—man who never washes himself!" exclaimed the Indian, strutting around like a turkey.

There was a shout of laughter from the whole troupe and Shanks, after diving his hands down into his pants pockets for a minute and staring at his late friend fixedly, remarked:

"And you're rightly named, you flat-headed sheep stealer."

Boys, I'm sold. Let's go hunt up a shop where they sell iced drinks with straws in them."

Learning that one of Pullman's magnificent palace trains, consisting of sleeping, dining, drawing-room and refrigerator-cars, was leaving that afternoon for San Francisco, Shorty engaged passage for himself and company by it, and a few hours later was rolling over the broad prairie in cars as sumptuously furnished as Fifth avenue drawing-rooms in New York, while a library and piano graced the drawing-room car, and a bell-cord at your hand summoned neatly-dressed and attentive waiters, who produced a sherry cobbler as if by magic.

"Well, fellers, this tops off any travelin' ever I put in," said Shorty as he lolled back on one of the handsome sofas, but his energetic, restless little body couldn't keep quiet long, and half an hour later he was sitting with Shanks out on the rear platform smoking and firing with their revolvers at droves of antelopes that galloped off on their approach, an innocent amusement, as the motion of the train prevented a person from taking anything like aim.

"Much game bagged?" asked Dave Reed, putting his head out of the door.

"You go bag your head," said Shanks.

"I've wounded two telegraph poles an' shot a hole thro' an ol' tomatoer can so far," answered Shorty, putting up his pistol and going back into the car in disgust.

What, with reading, joking, singing, playing cards, looking at the wild and grand scenery, firing at the prairie dogs and coyotes along the road, riding on the cowcatcher and platforms, playing pranks on the other passengers and cutting up some mischief all the while, the time slipped around so rapidly that the boys were sorry when their journey was ended and were wishing it had been twice as long.

All the necessary arrangements for their stay at the Grand Hotel having been made by their advance agent, who met them at the depot and had the troupe speedily transferred, bag and baggage, to their suite of apartments, where they scraped the dust and dirt of travel off themselves till Shorty swore he had left the biggest half of himself in the bathtub, after a square American feed Shorty and Shanks took a ramble up Montgomery to Bush street and inspected the theatre.

"It might be bigger, an' I guess we'd fill it if we could get up som' fresh gag dat'd tickle der boys," observed Shorty as he stood on the stage and looked at the rows of empty seats.

"There's half a dozen big shows running in the city now. I was looking at the posters of the California, Metropolitan, Bella-Union theatres and Maguire's Opera-House, an' they've all got big bills," said Shanks.

"Well, 'fi could strike som' bustin' ol' racket dey'd have ter change dere big bills inter fractional currency an' half-dollar shiners 'fore I got thro' wid my show," replied Shorty, leading the way out of the building.

On their way down to the theatre they had been beguiled into purchasing half a dozen cabbage-leaf cigars from an almond-eyed Chinaman's stand, the Celestial swearing to them in pigeon English that they were pure Havanas.

"Looks very much like a s-e-l-l widout der use of an eyeglass or telescope," remarked Shorty as he chuckled away one after another of the cheroots after vain attempts to extract some smoke from them.

"Stuck, and by a pig-tailed Chinaman at that. I'm 'fraid this western air is too much for us," returned Shanks indignantly.

"Hol' yer breath, pard. I t'ink I'll patronize dat heathen 'gain," answered Shorty, and dropping into a large toy store on Montgomery street, he purchased a dozen or so giant fire-crackers and a fuse. Armed with these he returned to Shanks, who was waiting for him outside, and made known his proposed racket, and they started off for the almond-eyed Celestial, whom they found calmly blowing the smoke of a cigarette through his nose.

"Ah, Melican man wanty morey cigary good from Hawana?" inquired the Chinaman, while a child-like and simple smile stole over his nutmeg-colored mug.

"Looks too innocent to suck eggs," whispered Shanks.

Then turning to the Celestial, he signified his desire to purchase some more, providing he was allowed to pick them out. To this the Chinaman at once consented, and Shanks and he stuck their heads over a box, while Shorty hastily but quietly affixed the giant crackers to the Oriental's pig-tail and lighted the fuse.

Shanks was busy in the selection of his third cigar when there was an explosion, and the Chinaman's head was jerked back as if he had been lassoed, while a wild, blank look stole into his face.

"Whizz! bang!" went the second cracker, with a report like a small cannon, and again John Chinaman felt his pig-tail fly up in the air and nearly jerk his head off. It was too much. With one scared look around, he clapped his hands to his ears and darted down the street like a dog with a tin tied to his tail, one of the giant crackers exploding every few yards and urging him on to fresh efforts.

"Go it, pig-tail!" yelled Shorty. "Melican man not so much fool as yer picked 'im up ter be."

"Illuminated skyrockets! but ain't he skinning it, though? Guess he'd make a match for your boneyard horse, Shorty," said Shanks as he held his sides and watched the fast disappearing Celestial, and, laughing heartily over the racket, they proceeded back to the hotel.

The opening performance of the New York Minstrels was well attended, all of the front seats and most of the back ones downstairs being filled by gentlemen, ladies and their families, while the galleries were packed with the fun-loving boys of San Francisco, gathered to welcome one of whose rackets, scrapes, adventures and victories they had read and heard so much that they knew him already.

The show took. It was a hit from the rising of the curtain. Everything, as far as it could be given, was fresh and original. The songs were new, and, like the stump speeches, written in most cases for the troupe. Each one strove to do well and succeeded, as the applause of the gratified audience testified. Dave Reed's songs, and dances were simply immense and received well-earned rounds of applause, and yet the boys were not satisfied, though they were pleased with the performance and applauded each actor cheerfully; but no sooner had he bowed himself off the stage than cries of "Shorty! Shorty!" filled the house.

"Well, fellers, I guess I'll go out an' let dem kids hav' a squint at my purty phizicognomy, my tall, commandin' figger, my number nine shoes an' listen ter my loot-like voice," said Shorty, laughingly, as he picked up his banjo, and putting a comical old grin on his funny face, he tripped lightly out and faced his admirers, who sprang to their feet and greeted him with the wildest enthusiasm, and it was a long time before they would let him proceed to play to them.

"Hang de playin'! We only want ter see yer, Shorty, and have yer tell us 'bout de way you warmed dem Milwaukee hams," yelled one of the gamins, and the chorus of "yes, dat's wot we wants," showed he was in the majority, but Shorty only said a few words to them and then when he had them all quiet and attentive, he grabbed up his banjo and soon sent them into roars of laughter with his comicalities.

The rest of the performance passed off quietly. The boys had seen and heard Shorty and were satisfied, and the curtain dropped on a well-pleased crowd.

"I believe you're just as big a boy to-night as any of them kids that was up in the gallery yelling for you," observed Shanks as they were fixing up preparatory to leaving the theatre.

"Well, I don't kno' but I am. Dere's one t'ing I do kno', an' dat is dat I wished it could hav' been fixed up 'bove so's I could hav' staid a boy till der last trumpet toots," replied Shorty, washing the burnt cork off his face.

"Going straight back to the hotel, or are you game for a spin 'round 'amongst the lively boys?" inquired Shanks as they struck the sidewalk.

"I vote for der spin, an' I'se game 'nuff for anythin' that weighs less dan a ton an' don't kick any harder dan a yaller mule," replied Shorty, and they sailed away in search of fun, about as gay and festive a pair of boys as you could pick up between the Atlantic and Pacific.

Their first layout was the Chinese Theatre on Jackson street, where they remained till the clashing cymbals, beating of drums, blowing of trumpets and twenty other kind of noises threatened to deafen them for life, when, on Shorty's suggestion, who had been poisoning himself with several cups of their prepared tea, they made a break.

"Nice gang dat. Shoot off dere moufs lik' a 'splosion of a powder factory. Rather marry a white cat wid a black tail dan one of dem canary-colored crows," said Shorty as they struck the sidewalk.

"Shorty, it's a wonder to me you never fell in love with some snug little piece of calico with a pullback and got married," remarked Shanks thoughtfully.

Shorty made no reply, and a few moments later, as they were passing a sporting kind of a house, run something on the Harry Hill order, he changed the conversation by inviting Shanks to go in with him and see what was going on.

On entering the exhibition room, after doing the requisite at the outside bar, they found the room set out with tables, which were about two-thirds filled with a half maudlin crowd of young sports, who were being waited on by a dozen or so female western beer jerkers. The centre of the room was a ring in which sports in striped shirts and boxing-gloves pelted each other till one was satisfied.

Shorty and Shanks took a table by themselves, and having ordered some soda cocktails and the best cigars in the house, were watching the sport, when a low, thick-set rough at the next table looked over and sneered:

"How long since they commenced letting dirty-nosed runts into this shebang?"

Shorty lifted his glass to hurl it, but Shanks caught his arm,

and raising himself up to his full height, he with one stride placed himself alongside the speaker and seizing him by the ear, he whispered in a voice hoarse with passion at the insult his little chum had received:

"Another word of lip to my friend, you loafer, and I'll mash you worse than a bunch of squeezed grapes."

The fellow, who was taken so by surprise that he was riveted to his seat, glanced up at Shanks' long, muscular figure, his pale and determined face, and weakened with a growl of:

"Why don't he travel with his mammy if he ain't able to fight for himself?"

"Tank yer, pard. I knowed yer'd do it, like der brick dat yer are, but yer needn't minded. I can an' am goin' ter get away wid dat hog 'fore I leave here," said Shorty, extending his hand to his partner and grasping his with a grip that showed their friendship lay deeper than words.

"Look out, gent'men, that's Bully McGuffin that runs the hoodlum gang," whispered the waitress as she laid the drinks and cigars on the table.

"Don't yer fret, sis; we'll look out; but der hoodlums 'll want anoder capt'n ter-morrer, 'fi ain't mistaken," replied Shorty, coolly.

"Is there anybody in the audience would like to put on the gloves?" asked the manager of ceremonies after a bout.

"I don't keer if I stick them on, if there's any feller wants his mug flattened," said Bully McGuffin, throwing off his surplus clothes and strutting into the ring, where no one seemed likely to tackle him.

"Now, where's my meat?" he demanded in his corner loafer style, as he looked around the audience for a victim.

"I don't mind bein' knocked 'roun' a little, an' we'll talk more 'bout dat meat bizness arter we're done," answered Shorty, getting up and handing his things to Shanks, who accepted his trust as second, only whispering:

"If he licks yer, pard, I'll chaw him up into mince pie meat and feed him to the dogs."

"Oh, I don't fight boys," sneered Bully.

"Yer've got ter fight or I'll kick der hull top of yer head off," said Shorty, sternly, stepping over the ring ropes and taking his gloves.

"Oh, well, if you want to be spanked and sent home crying to your mammy I'll do it for you in short time. I guess you don't know, though, that I'm Bully McGuffin of the Hoodlums."

"Yer look like a bully or a convict," said Shorty, giving a sign to Shanks that he was all ready.

"Time!" called the manager.

At the word they both stepped forward and stood facing each other, and the great difference in the pair was clearly and plainly noticeable. Bully McGuffin loomed up a couple of heads over his little antagonist, and his fat round figure looked as if he could seize and crush his pigmy adversary in his grasp. Shorty, with a cool, contemptuous smile upon his face, one foot a little in rear of the other, and his short, muscular little body square to the front, stood looking his man fair and plump in the eyes.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, watch the elephant gobble up the frog," said Bully, making a strike at Shorty, which the latter ducked and avoided, and before the latter could recover his guard he had leaped forward and put a right and left-hander with all his might on to the other's bugle, drawing the claret and stunning the bully.

"Bully for the bantam, I say, and I don't care if the whole hoodlum gang hears me," said a gentlemanly young fellow who stood in Shanks' corner.

"Darn his infernal picture! I'll warm him for that," exclaimed Bully, making a rush at Shorty and crowding him back by force of brute strength.

"Didn't get a crack in on me wid all his pokin'. I'll lick 'im, pard, or my name's not Shorty," said our little hero as he sat on Shanks' knee to get his breath.

"An' I'll bet an' even hundred you lick him if I get licked myself by the hoodlums," said the young sport behind Shanks.

"Time!"

This time the bully evidently meant to force the fighting, overpower Shorty by his strength and wind up the match at once, but he changed his mind somewhat when Shorty stood his ground, warded off two or three fearful blows aimed at him, caught one on the shoulder, and then jumping in, pummeled Bully's face with a one, two sledge-hammer cracks that drove that fellow into his corner with a hurry.

"Bully, bully and bully again! You've got him licked, chum, or I'm a grasshopper!" exclaimed Shanks, and he was right, for the bully, unbuttoning his gloves, muttered:

"I didn't come here to fight professionals. I thought this was an amteur put up."

There was a wild cheer and a filling of glasses, shaking of hands, congratulations and enthusiasm for our little hero, for Bully McGuffin's reign of terror was now broken, and he slunk from the hall like a dog in dog days, with his tail between his legs.

"Little fellow, the best in the house is yours to call for," said the proprietor, coming forward, smilingly, to where Shorty was putting on his coat; but our little hero refused everything but a wash and departed with Shanks without being the worse by a scratch.

"I knowed he hadn't der backbone to stan' squar' up an' tak' it rite an' lef'," observed Shorty as they made their way back to the hotel.

"I'm too proud to say 'boo' to a goose if we met one. You licked him so quick, an' all the way through at that, that I feel like climbing up on the top of some of these church steeples and yelling 'Hurrah for my pard!'" answered Shanks enthusiastically.

"Pshaw! dat warn't nuthin' ter get 'way wid dat calf. Dat's only child's play," said Shorty, and, coming to their hotel, they struck out for their rooms and retired.

It turned out that among the crowd who had witnessed Shorty's prowess was a reporter, and the next morning all San Francisco was reading an account of "How a Bully Became a Mouse."

Talk about your full houses, talk about your crowds, your jams! The surging, crushing pack of people that besieged and occupied aisles and every foot of sitting or standing room in or anywhere near the Alhambra Theatre for the rest of that week looked to an outsider as if they wanted to carry the building by storm rather than a party of people struggling to pay their way to see a performance. Shorty, of course, was tickled to death. Full houses he was bound to have, if there were a hundred counter attractions running in the city.

His reception every night was a perfect ovation, the boys upstairs howling for him till they were hoarse. "The boy that got away with Bully McGuffin" was a war cry that would start round after round of cheers from Shorty's youthful admirers. Nor was it confined to the boys; the respectable and working class hailed his victory as one of law, order and pluck over outlawry, bullyism and brutality and joined the boys in their tribute of cheers till the old building fairly trembled beneath their applause, when Shorty would come smiling before them.

"Well, pard, how does the crowd suit you now? There wasn't room for a ratan walking cane to stand up on tiptoe in the house to-night," remarked Shanks on the evening after their visit to the boxing saloon.

"It's der biggest jam ever I struck. Now, yer see, I tol' yer dat der buildin' might be big 'nuff for any oder gang of burnt corks, but der New Yorkers, but dem boys can fill der biggest show hous' in der country if yer only give dem half a show," answered Shorty, smilingly.

"How long are you going to stick it out here?" asked Shanks after a pause.

"Well, yer see, dat all 'pends on sarcumstances. If t'ings work O K, we may ring up der curtain for anoder week; but I can't tell from where I sit prezactly," replied Shorty as they turned into the hotel, ordered cooling drinks and cigars sent up to their rooms and took the elevator up.

"Well, pard, here's to you and the New York Minstrels, and may they long stick together and prosper," was the toast proposed by Shanks half an hour later as he opened a bottle of iced champagne and filled two glasses with the sparkling wine.

"Yes, dey're as square a lot of fellers as I eber struck; none of yer snide, hamfattin' gang 'bout dem, an' dey know dere biz up ter der handle, every pop; so I'll join yer heart an' hand in dat toast, chum," answered Shorty.

CHAPTER V.

Shorty and Shanks we find in the smoking room, the former engaged in fixing a paper fool's-cap on a countryman who has fallen asleep in one of the chairs and whose face has been already adorned with a violet ink mustache and pair of side whiskers.

"Dere," said Shorty as he plucked a few feathers from a duster and stuck them in the sleeper's hat. "'Al Kickabud sneezum,' as the Turks say, which, in Yankee talk, means 'Darn my buttons, but yer'd mak' a better sultan dan yer would a 'tater-bug masher; an' I hope yer get der nomernation an' get elected.'"

"I think if he wakes up he'll elect us for to get our heads punched," remarked Shanks, who was standing by the open window dropping peanut shells into a tooth-powder man's tray on the sidewalk below.

"I wish I'd some way of painting the pacha's nose a light, tasty green," regretted Shorty, standing back and looking at the sleeper artistically.

"He'll paint your eyes black and blue, if he finds out who frescoed him."

"I'd risk all dat 'fi only had a couple of little flags ter stick

behind 'is ears an' a drum ter hang 'round der Turk's neck," chuckled Shorty.

"Keep straight on with your infernal work if you think there's tary a hereafter. Why can't you be guileless and innocent like me?" asked Shanks as he leaned out a little and adroitly flipped a peanut square into the mouth of an old citizen, who was getting his teeth experimented upon.

The advent of the peanut set him off into a violent fit of coughing, on recovering from which he immediately set to, kicked the tray of tooth-powder into the gutter and hammered the professor till he looked as if he'd been run through a thrashing machine.

"Let's mosey somewhere. Hanged if I don't believe my legs'd take to growing longer if I didn't give them something else to do," proposed Shanks, who had dodged back out of sight when the professor began to explain the sad peanut affair.

"Whither, most noble duke, would'st lead this bantam?" asked Shorty.

"There, that piebald snoozing friend of yours is going to wake up and we'll both get duked out of here on our starboard ears," said Shanks.

"Dyvel a drop of danger. Der Turk slumbereth lik' a prize twenty-pound baby with a moist nose. Now, wher' d'yer want to hoof it ter?" answered Shorty.

"We can ride, if you'd rather."

"Too dusty."

"Well, how are you on a spin to the Golden Gate and a dinner at the Cliff House?"

"I ain't on dat layout, pard. Legs ain't built 'nuff lik' a camel's ter mak' a trumper of me."

"There's the Mission Dolores, with its California wine. Won't that tempt you?"

"Well, it might," said Shorty with a sudden serious air, which was not at all usual with him; "but I gotter go see how Chip is."

"Who's Chip?" asked Shanks.

"Don't you know Chip?"

"No, I'm sure I don't."

"Why, Chip is my son. I call him Chip because he's a chip of the old block, and that's me."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have a son," said Shanks in amazement.

"Yes, and he's the cutest little feller you ever see, or he was when I saw him last. He's in a boarding school out here, and that's why I came all the way to Frisco, 'cause I wanted to see him."

"But you never told me anything about this," said Shanks.

"Well, I didn't like to," said Shorty. "You see, his mother wasn't quite right in her head for some time before she died, and I never cared to say much about it. Den I was knockin' about so much an' couldn't take care of Chip, and so I had him sent out here, where his mother's folks live, and put in a big boarding school to be educated. He's big enough now to help me in the business, and so I thought I'd take him out on the road with me."

"That's quite right," said Shanks, "and it's not so strange that you should not have said anything about it. So the boy's mother is dead?"

"Yes, and all her folks now. They put the boy at school, but it'll be all right 'cause he knows me fast enough."

The school was outside the city and Shorty and Shanks drove out there, stopping on the way while Shorty purchased a miniature outfit for his son exactly like his own.

When they reached the school Shorty called for the proprietress and when she entered the ante-room he said:

"Good morning, ma'am. I've come for the boy, Shorty Junior. I'm Shorty."

"I don't know whether you are or not," said the woman, who was tall and stout and dressed very showily. "Those who put the boy here must come after him."

"They can't, they're dead," said Shorty.

"I can't give him up to strangers," said the woman. "How do I know that you are Shorty?"

"Mebby I ain't; mebbly the telegraph pole wid me is the man," laughed Shorty, "and they got his name twisted. Would you think I was anybody but Shorty by my size?"

"I don't care who you are," snapped the woman. "You can't have the boy, and that's all there is about it."

"But madam—" broke in Shanks.

"You have nothing to say about it," said the proprietress of the school.

"Indeed I have," said Shanks. "I'm Shorty's manager and his lawyer, too, for that matter. If it's a question of money, now, we can easily satisfy you."

The woman was not at all mollified by this and snapped:

"You can't have the boy, and that settles it."

"Can't I see him?" asked Shorty.

"No, you can't. How do I know that you won't slip him in your pocket and carry him off?"

She might easily have done so, but the idea that Shorty could do it was very laughable.

"Come now, lady," said Shorty. "I leave it to you if it's fair to keep a boy from his father. Just bring him in, and if he don't know me and if he ain't the livin' image o' me I won't say another word. If there's anything comin' to yer for keep and schoolin' just lem'me know and I'll settle de hull biz right here. Dere ain't much to me, but what dere is is as square as a house."

"You couldn't have a fairer offer than that, ma'am," said Shanks.

"I don't know either of you," said the big woman, "and I'm not going to give the boy up nor let you see him."

She couldn't help the latter, however, for at that moment the door flew open and a little runt not much more than a foot high came bursting in, ran up to Shorty and said:

"Hello, old man! Shake! I heard you was here and so I skipped der lessons and come to see yer on de jump. See?"

"If that isn't your son, he's nobody's," said Shanks in a tone of decision.

"Hallo, long legs! How are you? Shake."

"Of course I will," said Shanks, bending double to shake hands with the midget. "What's your name?"

"Shorty Junior, or Chip for short," said the boy, running and climbing on Shorty's knee.

"There, madame!" said Shanks. "Now will you give up the child?"

"No."

"Not for money?"

"No."

"Say, dad, ain't der ole hen goin' ter let you have me?" asked the boy.

"She says not."

"Well, she's got a gall. I know why. She wants to put me in der show business. Dere was a man here last week and offered her big mon to let him have me."

"It isn't so," said the woman, coloring. "I love the little rascal, and I don't want to give him up, and I won't."

"We'll see about that," said Shanks. "Madame, we'll settle this affair now. I presume there is a magistrate near at hand. We will go to him and settle this business. I don't propose to see my client swindled out of his rights, and if you won't go to a judge now and settle this matter, I'll get an order from the court and compel you to produce him."

"Dat's the way to talk, Lathy!" chirped the boy. "Say, you're a la-la."

"I've been talkin' to yer easy, misses," said Shorty, "but now I'm comin' right down to biz. If yer don't go wid me and Shanks and Chip to de judge bloke and settle dis ting now, it'll cost you more money dan yer want ter spend, and yer won't keep der kid neider. So shoot yer mouth off quick and decide wot it's ter be."

"I am not to be browbeaten by any runt like you," said the woman. "You are not a fit person to have charge of the boy, and there isn't a judge in the land who would take him from me."

"Come right now and settle it den," said Shorty. "Here, Chip, I brought you a suit of clothes. Go an' fix yerself."

Chip ran off with the bundle that Shorty gave him while the proprietress went to array herself for the street.

She soon returned, wearing a showy dress and sack and a dizzy hat with big feathers in it.

Then Chip came in, looking like Shorty cut down, and said:

"How is dis, dad? Say, you de sort, on'y I ain't got no watch and chain like youse."

"You'll get 'em," said Shorty with a laugh. "Come on, start der parade a-movin'. Will you go in der carriage, missis, or will yer walk?"

The lady consented to ride, and the party rode to the nearest magistrate.

His Honor convened court at once and asked that the case be started.

He was fat and puffy and bald, with a double chin, clean shaven face, bushy eyebrows, bags under his eyes and bristling earlocks on each side of his bald head.

"Now, then, what is the matter in dispute?" he asked, taking his seat.

"Dat's me, judge," said Shorty Junior, jumping on the knees of the clerk and then upon the table.

"Gracious me! what's that?" gasped the surprised judge, staring at the midget.

"I'se Shorty Junior, boss," chirped Chip, tipping his hat.

"How is things, anyway?"

"Order in the court!" roared the judge. "Now then, what's the case?"

"Der lady won't give up der boy, my son, yer Honor," said Shorty, "and so I come to you."

"Knowing you to be fair-minded and impartial and always just," put in Shanks.

After that the proprietress of the boarding school didn't have the least bit of a case.

She blubbered and said that it was too bad to take the child from her when she had grown to love it and a lot more rubbish like that, but the boy's own testimony settled that part of it, and the judge awarded the custody of Shorty Junior to Shorty and the case was closed.

Shorty paid the woman the boy's board for a year and then he and Shanks and Chip left the courtroom happy and the three went to Shorty's hotel.

It somehow got out during the day that Shorty had been in some sort of trouble, though what it was no one seemed to know, and the Alhambra Theatre was jammed to the doors with curious spectators to see if Shorty would show up.

The curtain was rung up and the performance ran along smoothly and nicely, the fun-provoking gags all being caught up on the fly by the audience and laughed at, while the numerous hits all received a liberal tribute of applause.

Everything passed off in this manner till it came time for Shorty's appearance, when the outside curtain suddenly dropped, leaving the audience in a ferment of excitement.

"He's backed out!"

"Hadn't the nerve!"

"Got weak in the knees!"

"'Fraid to show up!" yelled the crowd; but, even as they spoke, up went the curtain, and there, square before them, standing by a small table, on which rested a large glass bottle containing a tiny doll-like figure, stood Shorty, dressed in a magdalen's suit of black velvet, covered with spangles, and smiling out upon the sea of faces before him with that cool, comical grin upon his funny old face.

"Three cheers an' a 'Frisco bulldog for Shorty, der gamest boy out!" proposed a ragged urchin, climbing up on to his seat and waving his torn and peakless cap around his uncombed head, and they were given with such a vim that people blocks away thought a riot had broken out.

"'Tank yer, boys, for I kno' dat yer mean it," said Shorty, stepping forward and bowing and then resuming his place by the table, he continued: "Ladies an' gents, I want ter 'zibit ter yer der mos' remarkable phenomenon dat was eber presented fore an awjience in dis rooy' world of ours. Dis bottle imp has der power of action, voice an' motions of any one of us. Jeas pry open yer ears an' I'll speak ter 'im," and, putting his mouth to the bottle, he hailed:

"Hello, Chip; how's t'ings?"

"Eberything's lovely an' der goose hangs high," came out from the bottle, while the audience roared with laughter to see the creature get up and scratch himself in his glass coffin and then quietly seat himself again.

"A very clever combination of mechanism and ventriloquism," said a gentleman, who was in one of the private boxes, and who had been watching Shorty's performance closely.

"Yer t'ink dat dat's mechanism do yer?" asked Shorty, who, as well as half the house, had heard the remark, as it was meant they should.

"Don't think anything about it; I'm sure of it," answered the other, who was a prominent politician and well-known character around the city.

"An' dat der voice was ventriloquism?"

"Positive of it. You can't easily deceive me with your puppets," answered the man dictatorially.

"Ter convince dis gentleman an' ter amuse der res' of my friends in der audience, I'll remove der bottle an' let yer see dat it's neither ventriloquism or mechanism. Boys an' folkses, lem'me interjuce ter yer my son, Shorty Junior, who, I trust, yer will always use as well as yer 'ave his dad," said Shorty, removing the bottle, which proved to have no bottom, and lifting the tiny chick of a fellow down on to the floor.

"I ain't so awful big, fellers, but I'se a hunky rat on der fun, an' a gallus boy for a lark," spoke the kid, trotting forward to the footlights and looking coolly around.

"That takes my hat!" exclaimed the politician in the box, while a kid in the gallery scrambled up and yelled in a shrill voice that caught every ear in the immense crowd:

"T'ree cheers for Shorty, and, fellers, le's giv' t'ree times t'ree for Shorty Junior, an' 'f he's only up ter his dad he'll make a hummer."

The newsboy's proposed cheers were given with a will, the whole grand audience standing up and opening their mouths to let the sound ring out, and the curtain fell upon a scene of the wildest enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VI.

We left our friends, Shorty and Shorty Junior, at the Alhambra Theatre after the introduction and enthusiastic reception of the latter by the boys of San Francisco.

"The boy's made a hit, pard, and mark my words, he's going to prove the trump card in our New York Minstrel deck. He's sharper than chained lightning or a bunch of razors tied up with blue ribbon; cooler than iced cucumber in July and fuller of mischief than seventeen monkeys," remarked Shanks as Shorty and himself sat in the smoking-room enjoying a good-night cigar before going up to bed.

"Yees, he's sharp 'nuff, an' 'twon't be his dad's fault if he don't waltz ter der front; but den yer kno' some kids is born to be rustlers, an' dey makes rings howl from der cradle till dey're ready ter pass in dere checks, and dere's oders dat's born ter be clams, an' der mud sticks fas' ter dem all der lives," replied Shorty, glancing over to the sofa, where he had left his boy asleep, and starting up on finding him missing.

"Well, what's the kickup now?" inquired Shanks, looking inquisitively at him.

"The kid's gone! I laid 'im down dere 'sleep when we com' in," answered Shorty, anxiously.

"Gone! Let's go look for him at once. He must have got up and have walked away in his sleep," said Shanks, springing to his feet, and the pair hurried out into the hall in time to see Shorty Junior coming tearing toward them seated astride of an immense Newfoundland dog belonging to the hotel.

"Hey! look out there, boy, where you're going," exclaimed Shanks, as he saw the dog come boiling toward him.

"Clar' der trac' when the bulgine's out!" yelled Shorty Junior, throwing his arms around the dog's neck, while the latter, darting between Shank's long legs, upset him in a mixed-up heap on the floor.

"I was mistaken when I said he'd walked away in his sleep. I should have said he'd ridden away," remarked Shanks, getting up and looking over his shoulder to get a glimpse of the extent of damages.

"It's confounded rough dat der kid gib yer der flop. But, ha! ha! ha! it was too funny for anythin' ter see yer kickin' up yer heels at der cetlin', while der dog an' boy scooted 'long 's if nothin' had happened," said Shorty, leaning back against the wall and laughing heartily.

"Yee-up, very funny, I s'pose," said Shanks, very gravely, as he inspected a foot-long rip in the rear of his clothing.

"Oh, Lord! I'll split myself laughin' 'f you don't stop!" shouted Shorty, going off into fresh peals of laughter as he caught the mournful expression of his chum's face.

"If you have any idea of making a bare-backed circus rider out of him I'll guarantee success from the word go," observed Shanks, and they started off in the direction the boy and dog had taken, encountering people every few yards, who were picking themselves up and indulging in fireproof language in reference to a dog and monkey that had collided with them a few minutes before.

"See them! see the d—l, man! If you had them take your legs from under you, roll you seven times over on a dirty floor, knock out your false teeth, carry away your wig, ruin your new ten-dollar hat and chuckle at you as they rushed away I guess you'd see all you wanted to of them!" exclaimed an old gentleman, of whom they made some inquiries.

At the next turn a darkey waiter was found seated in a general smash-up of crockery and a late supper.

"Did yer slip, Sambo?" asked Shorty.

"No, sah, no slip. Just as I'se was coming 'long de passage wid de jemmen's supper 'long com 'a big dog wid de debble on his back, scooted de legs from under dis chile, an' de nex' t'ing I knowed dere was a smash an' dis coon foun' hisself squatted jess 'here, boss," exclaimed the darkey, looking wistfully around at the smash up.

"Sure it was der devil, be yer?" asked Shorty, laughing as he saw the mixture of fried eggs, darkey, oysters, astonishment, broken dishes and fear that were scattered around.

"Shuah, sah. He com' a-flyin' 'long 'bout as big as a doll, sah, an' when he seed dis darkey rolling roun' in der broken dishes he jes' grinned an' scooted 'long, sah," answered the waiter, getting up and wiping some of the yellow egg off his black face.

"Here, boy, 'ere's somefin' ter pay for yer bruises an' der mash of crockery," laughed Shorty as he slipped a fiver into the darkey's hand and hurried on.

"Dundervetter! Gott in himmil! I go right oud mid dis 'ouse!" moaned a voice, and as they turned into a side passage they came across a corpulent Teuton sprawling at full length on the floor, while Shorty Junior and the dog could be seen bounding away in the distance.

"What's the trouble, Sourkrout? Been seeing the circus riders same as I was?" asked Shanks, sympathetically.

"Droubles, you pet! Shust as I gom along dot hall a pig tog mid a tyfel of a ding on ids pack run under me mit ids head an' frowed me mid der ground ker splang," answered the Teuton, scrambling to his feet and looking wildly around to see if any trace of his late enemy was in sight.

"Oh, pshaw! I guess yer must 'ave slipped on somethin' an' sot down," observed Shorty, and he was passing on when the corpulent and excited Teuton grabbed him by the arm and said:

"Mein friendt. sthop a leedle dill I dalk der you mid mine moundt. You dinks ven von dings runs in und frows mine legs vide open, so dot dat ish vot you call shlippin'."

"No, dat's what dey call skatin', Dutchy," answered Shorty.

"So—I hear me 'pout dot ding skadin', put de nex' feller dot ox me der skade I shust break un peer glass ober his head," soliloquized the Teuton as he moved slowly and sadly away.

At the end of the corridor Shorty Junior and his charger were captured and taken prisoners.

"What kind of a racket is dis yer've been puttin' up on me?" asked his paternal as he lifted him up in his arms and tried to speak sternly. But the twinkle in his eye and the wrinkles of laughter around his mouth showed that he was thinking of his own youthful pranks.

"Oh, dad, 'f yer knew what a scrumptious hoss he made, an' yer could have seen der nig wid der dishes slammin' ober on his ear an' hollerin' for der debbel ter let 'im 'lone dis time yer'd split," chirped Shorty Junior, cuddling himself up cosily in his paternal's arms.

The mirthful wrinkles around Shorty's mouth deepened into a broad grin, and the youngster knew he was forgiven, and returning to their rooms, they soon after retired.

"Anything fresh on the carpet for to-day?" asked Shanks the next morning as the trio sat eating their breakfast in their own rooms.

"Nothin' 'ticula. I'm goin' ter take a spin down ter see how Barebones is pannin' out. Did I tell yer dat I'd entered 'im for der Grand Occidental Fall Meetin'? Dere's twenty of der Pacific high flyers goin' ter put in dere best licks for der ten thousand dollars, an' I'm just fool an' sassy 'nuff ter t'ink dat Barebones can skin der lot of dem. 'E's got one of der best jocks from der east ter train 'im, an' ne tells me he can jess everlastingly get over der ground," answered Shorty.

"P-h-e-w!" whistled Shanks, "and who are you going to get to ride him?"

"Dat's jess der trouble. Barebones, yer see, can't carry der weight of a man jock wid der same chances of pullin' thro'."

"None of the boys that could straddle him, is there?"

"Nary one dat knows how ter straddle a turtle."

"Couldn't you ride him yourself?" asked Shanks.

"Der trouble 'bout dat is, I don't waht der crowd ter tumble ter it bein' der same layout dat scooped der Chicago folks in. I've had der ol' hoss clipped, an' a false tail tied on, an' as he's goin' ter run a gallopin' race 'stead of trottin', I kinder t'ink I'll hoodwink dem 'f only had a fresh han' ter ride 'im," explained Shorty.

"Say, dad, can I toot my horn for a minit?" asked Shorty Junior, looking around from behind a slice of toast he was scoffing.

"Yes, grind away."

"Yer needn't fret yer gizzards out 'bout a jock'. I'll ride dat plug for yer, ol' man," continued the kid, quietly.

"You?" exclaimed Shanks.

"Yer'd mak' a pretty fist ridin' 'im," remarked his dad sarcastically.

"Keep yer shirts on a minit. I'll ride der nag 'f yer say so, an' I tell yer I ain't no slouch at it. Dad, yer jest giv' me a pair of spurs an' a whip, an' I'll take all der run out of a hoss dat's in 'im," answered Shorty Junior.

"Wher' in Ginerel Jackson d'yer learn ter squat a hoss?" demanded Shorty, looking at the kid with wide open eyes.

"Oh, cheese it, dad; didn't I used ter spin der nags up ter Jerome Park, in Ni Yorick?" answered the boy, coolly.

"By jinks! if he can stick on he's the very card," exclaimed Shanks, slapping his knees.

"I'll risk 'im, by jingo!" said Shorty, jumping up and slapping his friend enthusiastically on the shoulder.

"Dere ain't much risk, dad, if der hoss'll run," chirped Shorty Junior.

"He'll run," replied his paternal, and a few minutes later they took a walk down to the stable and inspected the boneyard steed, who was quietly munching his feed.

"Yee-up. I guess he'll leg it," was the verdict of Shorty Junior after he had had a gallop on the back of Barebones.

"Going to run him to win, Shorty?" asked Shanks as they walked back to the hotel.

"From der word go."

"That settles it. I'm just going to stick up my little pile on it, and if you want any sugar, sing out," answered Shanks.

"I guess I've got 'nuff ter run me 'long. 'Fi run short I'll squeal, pard," said Shorty.

There was an immense jam at the race course the morning of the grand race; twenty of the fastest and best blooded steeds in the great West were going to struggle for the championship and the rich stake and the people were excited to the heart's core over the event.

On the course all was a surging mass or turbulent humanity, men rushing here and there with little books entering their bets.

"Two to one on Gray Eagle!"

"Eight to one against Western Prince!"

"Even on Gray Eagle!"

"Six to one on Ah Sirs!"

"Eight to one on Lily Dale."

"How's Boneyard?" shouted a voice, and a roar of laughter seemed to say he was out of the race entirely.

"Why, ain't he going to run?" asked Shanks as he elbowed his way into the crowd.

"Oh, yes, he'll run like a dog's tail, behind," answered the pool seller, laughingly.

"Got any ducats 'bout your clothes says so?" inquired Shanks.

"Forty to one 'gainst Boneyard!" exclaimed a sport.

"I'm in on that for hundreds, if you want to make it," said Shanks.

"An I'll scoop in all der loose money any o' yer fellers may have lef' arter yer thro' wid dat man," chimed in Shorty, putting in an appearance with a roll of bills in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha! all the fools ain't dead yet," laughed the pool seller.

"Put up or shut up," said Shorty as he shoved his money out to the right and left.

"There goes the saddling bell," called out a man, and Shorty and Shanks rushed off to the shed where Boneyard, as they called him, was standing.

"Boneyard, entered by Shorty. Who's going to ride him?" inquired one of the judges as the skeleton steed was led forward with a miniature saddle strapped on his back.

"Yer can sot me down for dat posish," chirped a voice, and Shorty Junior, in a suit of royal purple velvet, trimmed with silver bullion, tripped up in front of the astonished judges and ducked his cunning little jockey cap.

"Great heavens! what's that?" exclaimed the judge, starting back and looking at the sepcimen before him.

"Dat's der hoss-fly dat's goin' ter win dis race, ol' stick in the mud," answered Shorty Junior, tripping over to his father and Shanks.

"Hold him in; don't force der runnin' till der home stretch, an' den push 'im for all dat's in 'im. Look out for dat Gray Eagle plug, an' 'f he wants ter pass yer at der start, let 'im bile. I t'ink dat's all, little one; only win der race for me 'f yer can, as I've got a pile of stamps hangin' on it," was what Shorty said as he lifted his son up in the saddle.

"Hush, gov! If dere's a ghost of win in der ole plug I'll rustle it out of 'im, yer bet," answered Shorty Junior, while a shout of laughter went up from the immense crowd as he turned the skeleton steed and walked him quietly past the grand stand toward the starting point.

"Twig the monkey on the bunch of bones!"

"Take the baby off and put him to bed!"

"They aint' going to let that skin-and-bone thing with the monkey on ride, are they?"

"Take the plug out somewhere and let him die!"

"Gray Eagle against the field!"

"Seven to four against Jumping Jennie!"

"Twenty to one against Boneyard!"

"Eight to three on Western Prince!" yelled the crowd, while the ladies laughed and made their bets on their favorites.

There was a few minutes' pause before all the horses could be got together. Then down the course swept twenty of the fastest steppers of the Pacific coast, their graceful limbs striking out easily as their jockeys held them back.

"Go!" yelled the steward.

"They're off! they're off!" shouted the crowd as the horses sprang forward like arrows launched from a bow.

At first you could only see a confused mass; but by the time the quarter mile pole was reached you could distinguish their order. Western Prince led off by two lengths, closely followed by Jumping Jennie, who struggled bravely for the lead, urged on by her rider's spur and whip; then came the others in groups of two and three, among the last of which ran Gray Eagle and Boneyard, the latter about half a length in the rear of his Quaker-coated opponent.

At the half-mile pole the position was but little changed. Jumping Jennie had dropped back after being forced too much; Western Prince held his lead; but the free use of the whip and spur showed that he was being urged to his utmost. Gray Eagle, with Boneyard still lying on his flanks, had crept forward and now lay well to the front.

"Why don't he rush him?" exclaimed Shanks, excitedly.

"Der boy kno's what he's 'bout, yer bet," answered Shorty as he watched every jump of his horse through a glass.

At the three-quarter pole there was a change in the order of affairs. Gray Eagle, ridden by one of California's shrewdest jockeys, suddenly dashed to the front, collared Western Prince, and after a short, sharp struggle, darted past him, followed by Shorty Junior, holding back the skeleton steed, while the rest of the field were left tailing in the rear.

Down they came toward the home stretch, Gray Eagle straining every muscle and tendon to shake off his thin competitor.

"Hurrah! Gray Eagle wins."

"Gray Eagle!"

"Gray Eagle! 'Rah!'"

Even as they yelled there was a quick change, and the skeleton steed, for the first time feeling the whip and spur of his little rider, shot forward, shaking off his false tail, and the next moment had crossed the score, the winner of one of the closest run races ever had on the Western slope.

"Bully boy, yer done it like a little man!" exclaimed Shorty, rushing over to greet his son, while Shanks, in the exuberance of his spirits threw down his hat and danced on it.

"Close work dat was, dad, an' 'fi hadn't saved ol' Boney up in der fust dig out I never could 'ave fotched 'im thro' in dat las' pinch," crowed Shorty Junior, looking down comically at his dad, who was advancing to help him out of the saddle, while a laughing and cheering crowd gathered quickly around them.

"I thought I'd have died laughing when I seen the old plug wake himself up, shake his false tail off, and paddle ahead like a streak of greased lightning," observed Shanks, brushing the dust off his badly used hat.

"Where's the boy that rode that crowbait of a winner?" asked the rider of Gray Eagle, forcing his way over to Shorty's side.

"I 'spect's I'se der tooth-brush yer huntin' for," said Shorty Junior, turning and facing the inquirer.

"Well, by Jupiter in pink ribbons! if yer ain't about the shortest jock that ever I spurred against!" exclaimed the other, gazing down in a half astonished, half amused manner at his infant conqueror.

"Short 'nuff ter mak' short work wid dat gray nag of yourn, dat's why I'se called Shorty Junior, I s'pose," answered the impertly.

"That's so, youngster. Big or little, you cleaned out Bill Steven, and fellows say I ain't the worst jock on the slope," laughed his late opponent, good-naturedly.

"Well, it was anybody's race till der end. Dem oder snoozers run all der wind out of der nags 'fore dey got half way 'round," chirped our little winner.

"That's so. I tumbled to you laying on my quarter all the time, but I thought Gray Eagle could shake that skinny hoss off any time, and that's just where I got sucked in," acknowledged the other, moving away.

"Now, dad, slide me off to som' place where I can get som' chuck inter me, for I jounced myself so empty dat I'se hollow as a drum," said Shorty Junior to his paternal a few moments later, and, leaving his agents word in reference to his bets, he took a carriage, drove back to the hotel, and the little winner was soon packing grub into himself with an appetite four sizes too big for his small body.

There was an overflowing house that evening to greet the New York Minstrels, and the moment the curtain went up there arose a shout from the boys to see the boss rider of the West, who had that day scooped in the stakes and won the Grand Occidental race.

"Fetch out de jock!"

"Hey, hi! Shorty Junior!"

"Come out here and show yoursef!"

"Where's de boy dat skinned dem all out on de hoss ridin' bizness?"

"Shorty! Shorty! Shorty!" yelled the boys, while the other performers stood quietly waiting for the tumult to cease in order that they might make themselves heard.

"Hol' on der show for a minit an' I'll let der kid run out an' bow," said Shorty, and the next moment Shorty Junior, dressed in his little velvet riding suit, and carrying a small whip in his hand, tripped out, doffed his tiny cap, and bowing to the right and left, stood looking coolly at the immense crowd in front of him, who greeted his appearance with a shout of welcome.

"How did you get away with them?" yelled a voice.

"Hol' yer breath, iolkses, an' I'll giv' yer a verse dat I jes thort of," said the kid, and striking an attitude, he sang:

"I'se was out ter der track dis bery day,
Du—da, du—da—da;
An' I bet my money on a skinny ole nag,
But mos' der oder fellers bet on a gray,
Du—da, du—da—da.
Der skinny nag he won dat race,
Du—da, du—da—da;
Jess scooted in an' took first place,
An', oh, I'se glad I didn't bet on der gray,
Glory hallelujeram!"

The song, coming just at that particular time, and rendered as it was in such a comical manner by the tiny mite of a creature before them, carried the audience by storm, and Shorty Junior received a perfect whirlwind of applause, as he backed himself off the stage, and after a pause the regular performance proceeded as usual, all hands being well received.

"Well, Shorty, what are you going to do with the Boneyard now?" asked Shanks as they strolled slowly home that evening.

"Dere's a couple of fellers dat wants ter speculate. Dey've got an idea of totin' 'im down east an' catchin' der Yankees nappin', an' I may let 'im slide 'fi get my figger; 'fi don't, I'll bounce 'im off down dere myself, an' lay for suckers when I go back," answered Shorty.

"Best hang ter 'im, dad. He's a wind-splitter, an'll mak' som' of der fancy plugs look sick if he gits 'long side of dem," broke in the kid, who was trotting along by their side and amusing himself by the free use of a putty-blower, with which he had managed to paste a grocer in the ear with a ball of putty, break up a love scene between a red-headed girl and her adorer by hitting the former on the nose with a wad just as her admirer was leaning forward to kiss her; put an old lady in hysterics by filling her ear with putty; made a man hoist his umbrella, under the impression it was raining, as he heard the putty balls rattle off his brand-new silk hat; caused a lame darkey to throw up his supper by shooting a ball down his throat as he was in the act of swallowing an oyster, and finally startled a policeman out of a quiet snooze in a doorway by letting fly a pellet that flattened itself on his chin and scared him out of three months' growth.

"Darned if I don't believe the boy's about right. The horse is a ripper, no mistake, and I'll go snacks in the expense if you're willing," observed Shanks after a pause.

"All O K. Dat settles it," answered our little friend.

Two days after the above the New York Minstrels, having closed one of the most successful engagements ever played on the Pacific slope, making a host of friends by their gentlemanly behavior and willingness to join in any sport that was going, and enjoying themselves heartily, might have been seen packing their traps preparatory to once more turning their faces eastward on their return trip.

"Tain't no use howlin', boys, dat 'Frisco's a red-hot ol' town. What yer can't see of sport aint' worth buyin' spees ter hunt up, an' der folks dust down dere sugar widout rubbin' der figgers off a silver half dollar," said Shorty as they drove down to the Central Pacific Railroad, which was to convey them to Salt Lake City, where he had determined to lie over a few days and treat the Mormons to some first-class negro minstrelsy.

"Keno, correct, dad. It'ink it's jess a highfalutin' ol' town," chirped his son, who was leaning out of the window of the stage and fishing for gentlemen's hats with a cane with a pin in it.

Reaching the depot, they transferred themselves and baggage from the stage to one of Pullman's handsome cars and proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible for the long ride before them.

"Where are we going to show at in Salt Lake City?" asked Shanks as he nestled himself back lazily in his seat and watched Shorty Junior tickling the ear of an old gentleman in the seat in front of him, who had fallen asleep.

"Dere's only one in der place, der Salt Lake Theatre, so I reckon we'll open dere. I hear it's a rattlin' big shebang, but der folks has been in der habit of payin' ter com' in wid pumpkins, taters, cabbage an' t'ings dey raise, but we'll put der drop on dat kind of sugar," exclaimed Shorty.

"Nary cabbage'll see dis skeeter," chimed in the kid comically.

CHAPTER VII.

We left our friend Shorty and his troupe of New York Minstrels speeding over the Central Pacific Railroad on their way to Salt Lake City, where they proposed treating the Mormons to a few performances.

They had not been under way but a short time before Shorty's fun-loving and mischievous proclivities commenced to stir him up, and he squinted around to see what the prospects were for a racket. But everything was so tame and dull that he had almost given up all hopes of any fun and concluded to take a snooze when the train stopped at a station and a stout, red-faced old lady, carrying half a dozen baskets, bandboxes and small satchels, came puffing into the car, brushed off Shanks' hat in passing, stepped on Shorty's foot, dropped a setting of hen's eggs into Dave Reed's lap, jawed the conductor, backed a weak, mild-looking man over the back of a seat, nearly dislocating his spine, kicked a lady's pet dog in the ribs and sent him howling into a corner of the car, glared over a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles at the rest of the passengers, sassed a brakeman who hurried in, and finally dumped herself into a whole seat, threw up the window, spread her baskets, bandboxes and satchels out on the seat in front of her, and leaning back, observed:

"Deon't eny of you folks think yu're goin' teu get the best of Phoebe Jane Sprillers, for I cum from Bosting. I deu, an' I guess we kneow our rights deown there."

"I don't care a clam if yer were fifty Phoebe Janes. I want yer ter keep dem bug-mashin' feet of yourn off my little hoofs"

or I'll make yer think yer com' from der moon!" exclaimed Shorty as he pulled off his boot and nursed his crippled foot.

"Why deon't y'u put yure feet in yure pocket ef y'u don't want them stepped on, Mister Hop-on-My-Thumb?" she answered, mopping her red face with an American flag for a handkerchief.

"And if you'll allow my hat, madame, to remain on my head you'll greatly oblige me. I paid ten dollárs yesterday for that hat, and look at it now," said Shanks, returning from chasing his new silk hat up to the upper end of the car, where she had kicked it.

"Hoity, toity, daddy long legs, what're y'u cryin' 'bout? Fools and their money must be easy parted when y'u'd give ten dollárs for a hat. Why, I could get y'u one in Bosting for two," she chuckled as she arranged her baskets and handboxes.

"I wish to thunder you'd stayed in Boston," exclaimed Shanks, as he wiped tobacco spit off his shiny hat and gazed mournfully at the dents she had kicked in it.

"And I wish the devil would have flown away with you before he let you and your infernal hen yard into this car. Great Gollah, woman, look at my clothes, will you?" shouted Dave Reed, springing up excitedly and exhibiting his lap, into which half a dozen of the eggs she had dropped had mashed themselves over his clothes, leaving him painted as gaily as an Italian sunset on a circus bill.

"Eggs hain't goin' teu hurt anybody, ef they ain't rotten; en' them's jest fresh laid, so y'u needn't get yure skinny little back up tryin' to pick a muss with me, for I kin just tell y'u one thing, young feller; I won't take no sass from eny of y'u snipe-headed fellers as sure as my name's Phoebe Jane Sprillers."

"But, everlasting Columbia! you've ruined my clothes, and what in blue blazes am I going to do? I can't go this way," exclaimed Dave as he scraped all the egg off he could with his penknife, leaving a great yellow stain.

"Y'u kin paint yure legs and go naked for all I keer, my canary bird," chuckled the woman.

"If you was a man you'd stand a good chance of getting your eye painted black and blue, my Boston gazelle," growled Dave Reed as he started forward to the baggage car to try and scare up another pair of pants.

"An'—and—re—ally, ma'am, if yu'll allow m—me t—to mention it, I—I wish you w—would a—void, if—if possible, crushing m—me over the back of the seats, as I re—really be—lieve you've broken my spine in a dozen pieces," said the meek little man, hesitatingly, feeling around behind him to see if he could discover the fractures.

"Y'u arn't got any more backbone in y'u than an eel or a sawdust baby. Better stick a porous plaster on it an' keep yure bean chewer shut," replied the woman.

"But you'll excuse me for saying that I've got feelings the same as—"

"Feelings, fiddlesticks! Yu're worse nor a suckin' baby. If I had a stick of whalebone I'd make y'u a dozen backbones," retorted the red-faced woman, getting up and flouncing down the car to the water cooler that stood at the end.

"Now's yer time, Chip. Skin it an' lay low for a racket," whispered Shorty to his son the moment he saw her back turned.

"I'se fly as a detect," piped the little shaver, scrambling down from his paternal's knee, scooting across the car and climbing into one of the old lady's handboxes, Shorty fixing the lid over him without attracting the owner's attention.

As soon as she had returned to her seat Shorty arose, gave the wink to the others, and changing his seat to one just behind her, said:

"So yer from Boston, ma'am?"

"I kalkilate I be when I'm tu hum," she answered, tossing her head.

"Don't yer lie, Mrs. Sprillers, for I knowed yer when yer used ter dig clams at Coney Island," chirped a voice, causing Mrs. S. to start up as if stung by a rattlesnake, while a quiet grin stole over the faces of the rest of the troupe and the passengers who smelt fun ahead.

"I'd just give a whole lot of notions ef I could only find out that sassy-jawed critter that sed that," remarked the red-faced woman, staring around at the faces of the passengers.

"Is yer husband 'live, ma'am?" inquired Shorty, when she had partially quieted down.

"Yes, course he be. Y'u deon't take me for eny of them gallivantin' widders that's flying about the country, do y'u?" she replied tartly.

"Look out or der debble will snatch yer, ol' Sprillers. Yer kno' yer first husband was hung an' der nex' one's in der jug for sheep-stealin'," broke in the mysterious voice.

Mrs. S.'s eyes fairly started from her head and her face grew more fiery than ever as she glared viciously around in search of the speaker.

"I'd hang y'u, y'u sneakin' skunk y'u, ef I could git y'u."

"Yer want ter choke me lik' yer did yer blind gran'mammy,"

chirped the voice, coming apparently from under the seat, and the red-faced woman, feeling sure she had at last cornered her mysterious tormentor, made a savage kick in his direction, busting out the toes of a new pair of gaiters in the effort and scooping the nail off her big toe.

"Neow I want all y'u smarty folks tu jest know that I arn't goin' tu put up with this tomfooling an' lying eny mor', en' the first fule I ketch pokin' fun or sayin' things 'bout he I'll jest mak' him sweat," she threatened, wild with rage and vexation.

"Better dry up, ol' Sprillers, or I'll tell how yer used ter rob der chicken roosts an' get bilin' drunk down in Jersey," retorted the kid, who had carved himself a small hole in the handbox and was enjoying the fun as much as the rest.

"Yure en abominable liar whoever y'u be!" yelled the now frantic woman while the rest of the passengers burst out into a roar of laughter, Shorty stuffing his handkerchief into his mouth to prevent being heard.

"Don't yer call me a liar or I'll tell how yer eloped wid Cap'tin Pompon of der hoss marines an' was fotched back by der police after pawnin' yer duds."

"Listen tu that! listen tu them lies!" exclaimed the red-faced woman, hunting under the seats for her persecutor. "Me elope with Capting Pompon or eny other capting ever lived! Oh, but I'll put somebody in jail for this," she groaned.

"Mebbe yer wasn't sniped in der act of gobblin' a two-dollar bill out of der collecshun box at meetin' one Sunday, Sprillers," whispered Shorty Junior, while another laugh rang out so loud that the conductor rushed in, had matters explained to him, summoned a brakeman and instituted a thorough search.

"Yer'd better go hunt for dem two fares yer knocked down," suggested the mysterious voice, and the conductor flushed up and rushed back to where he thought he heard the voice, only to find a lot of small baskets and handboxes.

"Come out of here, I don't want any of this smart business in any train I'm running!" ordered the conductor, darting around from one part of the car to the other, followed by his brakeman.

"Thort der engin' was runnin' dis train. Guess yer best go soak yer head till it sprouts like taters, for yer can't ketch nothin' 'ere, Mister Ticket-Puncher," said Shorty Junior a few moments later.

"Over there! over there!" yelled the conductor, pointing in the direction of the meek-looking man, who was quietly smiling to himself over his revenge, when a wild dive was made. He was upset, shook, searched, pawed and his seat searched under and over for the hidden owner of the voice.

"Here! stop that! Let me alone! Keep your hands off me!" cried the meek passenger as he found himself flung around, shoved about, kicked and jammed.

"Dat swell-head of a conductor better go back ter whackin' bulls or skinnin' mules, for he don't know enough ter chew mush!" cried out the handbox imp.

"Cum round here, right smart. I heard the pesky varmint close to me," screamed the red-faced woman, and the conductor, who was at the other end of the car, rushed back in time to hear the voice remark:

"Yer squealed on me, Sprillers. Now I'se goin' ter tell how yer got der gran' bounce out of boardin' school cause yer didn't wash yer big feet."

"Y'u nasty, lyin' thief, y'u!" retorted Mrs. Sprillers, shaking her closed fist over her head in her impotent rage, and the aforesaid fist in one of its swoops coming in collision with the conductor's somewhat prominent nose as he hurried to her side, the next moment that car was filled with a howling, bloody-nosed conductor, a jawing, excited female, a chuckling boy in a handbox and a cart-load of laughing passengers.

"Why in Jehosophat don't you keep those pudding-bag fists of yours down?" demanded the conductor, wildly, as he held his handkerchief to his bloody nose.

"Durn it all! ef y'u hadn't sich an all-fired mule's snout, it wouldn't get tetch! Drat yure impudence anyhow, cumin' round an' runnin' yure long snipe nose 'gainst my hands, then blamin' me for it, y'u cat-skiner y'u," retorted the red-faced female, jumping up in her seat and facing the conductor.

"Paste 'im in der snout ag'in, ol' Sprillers!" yelled Shorty Junior, and the woman wheeled around like a flash to see who had spoken.

"Kick 'er on der shins, ol' ticket puncher. She ain't got 'er false calves on ter-day!" advised the imp, after a moment's silence.

"If any of you people's got any remarks to make, I'd like to have you get up and make them. As for me running my nose, ma'am, against your big boxing-gloves of fists, you're a confounded idiot to say so."

"I'm an idiot, am I? I tell y'u I'm Phoebe Jane Sprillers, of Bosting, en I arn't goin' tu stand no outwest ourang outang tu call me an idiot!" she shrieked, snatching the excited conductor by the coat collar and jamming him up in a corner.

"Leg-go me!" he yelled, trying to push her off.

"I'm an idiot, hey?" she cried as she pulled out a couple of handfuls of his hair, kicked him on the shins, tore off his collar

"I ain't afeard, kid, an' I glory in yer pluck," replied his dad; and a ball of twine being brought, it was fastened around his waist, and the next minute he was seen shinning up the water pipe like a little monkey, while the crowd, for the first time realizing the terrible danger of the undertaking and the wonderful pluck of the little shaver, which had put them all to shame, found their voices and burst into a mighty cheer.

Upward and upward climbed the plucky little kid, stopping for a few seconds now and then to get his breath back, often enveloped in whirling clouds of suffocating smoke, out of which he would be seen shinning upward, till at last he was seen to reach the window, pause a moment as if to breathe, and then, kicking in the sash, disappear into the burning building.

"I tell yer dat boy's got more backbone an' grit dan der ol' man. Dere ain't nuthin' slow or white-livered 'bout dat chick," said Shorty, who had watched his tiny son's ascent with a beating heart.

"Pluck, he's got a cart-load of it. I hope to heaven no accident will happen to him," answered Shanks.

"If he's got his dad's luck 'bout 'im he's all hunk; if he ain't, he's a gone coon."

"What keeps him?"

"What's he doing?"

"He's suffocated!"

"No, he ain't!"

"Who is he?"

"Oh Lord! Why don't he come?"

"The man ought to be shot that let him go up!"

"I wonder if he'll find any one!"

"It was murder to let him go!"

"They're all dead by this time!" were a few of the exclamations indulged in by the crowd as they watched, with strained eyes, the window through which Shorty Junior had disappeared for what to them seemed ages.

"Say, pard, jest yer mind der string for a jiffy. I can't stan' dis any longer, so up I goes after der kid 'fi get roasted at der fust step," said Shorty, commencing to haul off his boots so as to climb easy.

"Hang the string; let it hold itself. If you go shinning into that fiery furnace I'll be everlastingly darned if you don't find old Shanks pretty close behind you," replied the latter, also divesting himself of all his surplus raiment.

"There he is!"

"He's safe! he's safe!"

"Where, where is he?"

"At the window!"

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Bully for him!" yelled the crowd a second later, and glancing up, Shorty saw the kid scramble lightly out upon the window sill, wave his hand to him in a salute and then commence hauling in the line, to which a rope had been made fast, while the crowd cheered and shouted like mad.

"What's he say?"

"Is there any one up there?"

"What does he want?" demanded the crowd.

"Anybody up dere?" bellowed Shorty through a fireman's trumpet, and there was a hush over all as they listened for the tiny sprite's reply.

"Yes, dere's one ol' chap up 'ere 'sides me!"

"Living or pegged out?" asked Shorty.

And again silence fell over the multitude till they heard the kid's voice clear above the crackling flames and falling timbers.

"I'se kep' him livin' so far, dad, but I sorter wish'd yer come up an' giv' a feller a han'!"

Then there went up a mighty cheer that filled the air, and the crowd found themselves stirred into action by the child's brave words.

"Mak' der rope fas' ter somethin' strong in der room, an' I'll be wid yer, Chip, in less time dan it takes a fly to wink," called up Shorty through his horn.

"Tell 'im that I'll be along by the next train up," said Shanks.

A few moments later and the kid signaled all ready, and the next instant Shorty went shinning up the rope as if it had been a pair of stairs, closely followed by his inseparable chum, Shanks.

"Wher's yer victim?" asked Shorty as he swung himself on to the window sill.

"Dis way, dad, an' mind yer eyes, for der smoke's thicker dan a feather bed. I chucked a couple of buckets of water on ter him, an' sort of fotted 'im to, for he was clos' on a gone sucker when I lit on 'im. Guess der smoke must hav' keeled 'im over," explained Shorty Junior as he darted ahead, and, opening the door leading into another room, Shorty and Shanks beheld a fine-looking, gray-haired old gentleman stretched upon the floor insensible.

"Snatch 'im by der feet, pard, an' let's yank 'im out of dis hell-hole. See, dere's der flames bustin' thro' der door, an' it's hot 'nuff 'ere ter toast bread," said Shorty, and, grabbing the insensible form of the old gentleman, they hurried him to the

window, where a hastily contrived hammock of bed-clothing was made, and he was lowered into the waiting arms of the crowd below, who carried him off at once to a doctor's residence close by.

"Now, if a feller was only in New York, whar' dey'd know'd 'nuff ter pass yer up der hose, I'd stay till der roof fell in and squirt der last stream on der blaze, but I guess we may's well skip it; we've done 'bout all we could, so strike out, kid," said Shorty as the smoke poured into the apartment in a volume.

"Skip it is," answered the kid, coolly, as he swung himself out of the window and commenced letting himself slowly down the rope, amid the tumultuous cheers of the crowd, who caught him in their arms and were carrying the little hero off in triumph when his dad put in an appearance, rescued him, and seeing that they could be of no more assistance at the fire, the roof of the house threatening every moment to fall in, the three returned to the hotel and washed the smut and traces of the fire from their persons.

"That was a close call the old man had. If the kid hadn't dropped on him just as he did, he'd have been a g-o-n-e gosling," remarked Shanks as they came into the dining-room a couple of hours later and received the hearty congratulations of the rest of the troupe, the most of whom had been present and witnessed their acts of daring bravery.

"Pshaw, dat warn't nuthin'," said the kid to the party that had gathered around him and were complimenting him for his pluck and willingness.

"Wasn't nothing, hey? when there was five thousand grown men standing there afraid to risk it. Wasn't nothing for a little shaver your size to come to the front, and dashing into the jaws of death, rescue an old man? 'Tain't in my line much to blow, but I tell you, little one, it was something to be proud of till the day you die," said Dave Reed, patting him on the head.

"Yes, der kid showed he was game; but den if a father's got der grit an' means ter be squar', it's boun' ter com' out on 'im lik' der measles som' time," remarked Shorty promptly.

Crowded, jammed, packed, wedged and stuffed was the Salt Lake Theatre that evening. Seats full, passageways full, standing room full, persons who had never attended the theatre before turned out to have a look at the plucky little hero whose name and deeds were on every tongue and when, in response to repeated and not to be denied calls, he came before the footlights, his reception was one such as was never before tendered to a Gentile in that Mormon city.

The men stood up, waved their hats and cheered, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and applauded the comical-looking little shaver, who stood bowing his thanks before them.

"Dere, kid, dat'll do. Back yerself off now an' let der show bile ahead. Dem folks out dere 'd keep yer 'fore 'em till tomorrow," whispered Shorty from one of the wings, and a moment later he was joined by the boy, and the performance proceeded as usual.

The next morning, as Shorty and his boy were leaving the breakfast table, a waiter handed the former a card.

"Wher' d'yer show der gentleman in ter?" he asked the waiter.

"Private parlör, sah."

Taking the kid by the hand, Shorty ascended the stairs, entered his private parlör and found himself in the presence of the old gentleman whom he had helped the kid to save from a horrible death the day previous, and who, advancing, held out both hands, while he poured out his thanks in trembling tones.

"Cheese all dat, sir. I didn't do but a plaguey little, an' dat yer welcome ter, fer I'd do it fer any feller dat I saw in a tight place. Der kid 'ere was der chicken dat foun' yer, brought yer back ter life, watched yer an' helped ter get yer back ter yer friends by haulin' up a rope ter lower yer," said Shorty.

"My brave little child, I owe my life to you, then—"

"Oh, dat's all right mister. I'se lik' dad—I'se allus willing ter sail in and drag out 'fi can get a chance," interrupted the kid.

"Well, at least, let me offer you, as a slight reward, this check. I am wealthy and—"

"Hol' on, boss, yer've struck der wrong shop. Stick yer stamps back in yer pocket. Der kid nor me ain't sellin' any good turn dat we may do a feller. We're a heap 'bliged ter yer, but yer must 'scuse us from dirtying our fingers wid money ter pay for dirtying dem wid burnt boards and cinders," interrupted Shorty, pushing back the proffered check.

"But, at least, let me give it to the boy—"

"Dad an' me's got 'nuff stamps ter giv' us a bully ol' time, an' dat's all I wants, mister," said Shorty Junior, and the money matter having been put to rest, they sat down and had a long and earnest talk, parting warm friends an hour later.

"Pack up, boys; der train leaves at ten sharp," said Shorty next morning, and there was the usual swearing, stuffing, cramming, hunting up of missing articles, rushing, flurrying, sweating, jamming, stamping on the trunk lids, locking of locks that wouldn't lock and general excitement and agony that accompanies an order to travel on short notice. But by the time the

baggage wagon showed up everything was all O K and the troupe were cooling their throats with good-bye sherry cobbles and claret punches and wondering why it was they had allowed themselves to be worked into such a fever heat.

Quite a party assembled at the depot to see them off, and as the train moved away they were treated to three hearty cheers, which they returned.

The run over the Union Pacific Railroad to Omaha, where they were billed to perform next, was a pleasant but quiet one, Shorty and Shanks taking the kid out to the rear platform and instructing him in the use of a tiny pistol they had bought for him, and which he soon got into the hang of using so well as to leave his teachers in the shade. The rest of the troupe amused themselves in the old manner, telling stories, playing euchre, singing snatches of songs and coddling each other or any "fresh" person they could pick up.

On the arrival of the train in Omaha Shorty and his company found themselves besieged by a rabble of hotel runners, railroad ticket agents, hackmen, clothing-house drummers, baggage-smashers, porters, stage drivers, gaping citizens and boarding-house keepers.

"We don't require any tickets as I mentioned to you previously," remarked Shanks as he choked an agent up against a telegraph pole.

"Excuse me to-day, but leave me your address," said Dave Reed as he booted a boarding-house keeper under the coat tail for buzzing him to death.

"I'm extremely obliged for your kindness, but as we have a stage waiting we won't require your hack, as I've told you four times before," observed Tambo as he lifted a fellow who was annoying him delicately under the ear with his fist.

"Swim out, my covey. Yer too fresh. Better tak' a polker 'round der block an' see 'f yer can't pick up som' flat lik' yerself," chimed the kid to a ticket agent, who insisted upon carrying him.

After a hand-to-hand jostle and jawing match Shorty and his company succeeded in making their way through the rabble and finding the stage for the Wyoming Hotel, at which place rooms had been secured for them by their advance agent, who was once more on the road.

Having indulged in a bully old dinner, Shorty, Shanks and our little hero took a spin through the city, calling first at the Academy of Music and inspecting it.

"Omaha ain't much of a show town, so I s'pose we'll be doin' bully 'f we fill der house for der few nites we're goin' ter tie up 'ere," said Shorty as he ran his eyes over the long rows of empty seats.

"I should say, yes sir-ee horse and horse-fly," said Shanks.

"Well, le's mosey 't any rate; dere's a heap too much of a graveyard by moonlight 'bout an empty theatre ter suit me," answered his little friend, leading the way out of the building.

After visiting all the places worth seeing in the city, climbing Capitol Hill and gazing over the splendid view of the Missouri River and Iowa shores spread before them, they descended and were returning to the city by another route when they stumbled upon a large corral, in which several Mexican vaqueros were endeavoring to break in a herd of wild, snorting, kicking mustangs, which they had driven across the plains.

"Dem's worse ter ride dan circus mules. I tell yer what, pard, a feller mite as well try ter ride a slippery eel as one of dem snorters," observed Shorty.

"I'd rather straddle a streak of lightning," replied Shanks as he watched the mustangs plunge, rear, fall backward, spring up and dash madly and wickedly around the enclosure.

"I s'pose yer gets hold on som' dat can't be riddin sometimes," remarked Shorty to the owner of the herd, who was standing close to them.

"Not often. Them greasers can ride most everything that'll carry them, but they met their boss the other day in that fellow," answered the other, pointing to a small, magnificently made black mustang that stood in one corner, and, with head and tail erect, seemed to dare any one to approach him.

"What's der reason dey couldn't ride 'im?" asked Shorty Junior suddenly.

"Because he kicks, my bantam," said the man, pleasantly.

"Is dat all?" queried the kid.

"Oh, no, that ain't the commencement. He bites till you'd think he'd tear a person in pieces; bucks till he sends a man flying up in the air like a kite; rears, pitches forward, rolls over on the ground and tries to crush his rider; takes the bit in his teeth and darting away brushes his rider off against something; in fact, he's a very born devil on four legs, and there ain't a man between Maine and 'Frisco can ride him," explained his owner.

"I'll bet I can ride 'im for stamps, if dad'll stick up the sugar," said the kid quietly.

"You ride him? Why, infant, he'd kill you in two minutes," laughed the man.

"Dad, jess give me a show dis once. I never seed der t'ing yet I couldn't stick ter. Stick up a hundred 'gainst der hoss

an' 'fi don't fotch 'im ter time yer can sell me for soapfat ter der fust bloke dat'll buy me," chirped the kid, catching hold of his dad's hand.

"Dat's 'nuff, Chip. Der boy says he can ride dat nag of yourn, an' I'll stick up a hundred 'gainst the hoss dat he can," said Shorty.

"You ain't surely going to let the boy mount that untamed devil? Are you crazy?" demanded Shanks.

"You bet I jest am. Der boy says he can straddle 'im, and der boy knows his biz, an' his dad's backin' 'im wid his last nickel—savey?" replied Shorty, quietly but firmly.

"Oh, if you want to ride him, you're welcome, only don't blame me for any broken collar bones. As for the money, I don't want to rob any one of their wealth. I'll bet you or I'll give the boy the brute if he rides him, and if he don't you are to pay for oyster suppers to-night for the party," said the owner of the black.

"Done," said Shorty.

"Here, Gonzales, catch that black!" ordered the boss, and a few minutes later the king of the herd was struggling to free himself from the coils of a choking lasso.

"Put on der bridle an' strap der saddle tight," said the kid. "Now give me a whip and a pair of spurs."

"Be careful, Chip, an' don't let 'em catch yer nappin'," advised Shorty as he lifted his tiny mite of a son into the saddle, while it required the united strength of two men to hold the maddened animal quiet.

"Are you ready?" asked the owner.

"Let 'im gush!" answered Shorty Junior, and the men, springing away from his head, left him free.

For a moment the black stood still. Then, with a mighty leap he sprang forward, tossing his head, then, bracing his feet, he suddenly stopped, trying to hurl his little rider over his head.

"Dat's too thin for a feller dat's rode a circus mule," laughed the kid, and he drove the spurs into his untamed steed till he sprang high in the air and dashed away, plunging, rearing, kicking, bolting and bucking around the corral.

"Merciful heavens; the child will be dashed to pieces!" exclaimed the owner of the black as he saw that maddened animal plunging madly toward the fence, with the intention of crushing his little rider's leg against it.

"Don't yer fret; der boy's all hunk. He knows his biz, yer bet," said Shorty as he saw his son coolly toss his leg over the saddle and at the same time fetch the horse several sharp cuts across the ears with his whip.

"Hurrah! Well done, bantam. You're a trump!" shouted the man as he saw the kid send the steed flying around the yard a few minutes later like an arrow out of a bow.

Ten minutes afterward Shorty Junior reined up the black, now a white foaming animal, before his father and said as the latter lifted him off on to the ground:

"Dere, yer see, I've ridden yer hoss. He's mos' too lively fur ladies ter ride yet, but it ain't bad fun for a feller dat knows his biz up ter der handle."

"He's yours, boy, and I tell you he's found his boss, for you're the pluckiest little vaquero living," said the man, and, calling one of the men, he sent the horse to be taken care of till Shorty should send for him.

There was a rousing house gathered to welcome the New York Minstrels that evening. The city had been well billed, their coming duly heralded, and the papers, getting hold of the account of the Salt Lake fire, had copied it, with accounts of Shorty and the kid's bravery, so that all Omaha felt a desire to greet the little hero and turned out solid, giving him an enthusiastic reception when he appeared before the footlights.

CHAPTER IX.

"Dere's der boy wot saved der man from bein' burnt up!" yelled a bootblack in the gallery.

"Ain't he a hummer, though?"

"None of your slouches 'bout that little coon."

"But you bet he's ther every pop that he's wanted."

"But, Jimminy Gripes, what a little covey he is."

"Dat's a fac', fellers. I ain't much of a giant, but der little der is of me is tuff an' true," answered the kid, glancing up in the direction the voice had come from.

"Oh, you'll do."

"We don't want yer any bigger."

"F any big fellers giv' yer any sass while yer in Omaha yer jest send for Ike, der buffer, and 'fi don't bust dere crust for dem yer can souse my hoofs for pigs' feet," offered a thick-set, bullet-headed boy in the front row.

"Guess you was big enough to do the work at the Salt Lake fire," called out a boy from a printing office, and his remark called forth another storm of applause from the audience.

"Dat warn't nuthin', fellers, 'cause yer see fires is one of my best grips, an' I allus sorter lets myself loose at 'em," said Shorty Junior comically.

"Same as you do at horse races in California," said a voice.

"Der hoss was ter blame for carryin' dis innercent hair-pin in fust. I didn't run; it was der hoss," laughed the kid as he bowed himself off the stage amid cheers and shouts of laughter.

That evening as Shorty, Shanks and the boy were making their way back to the hotel from the theatre Shorty remarked:

"By der way, Chip, I had dat black mustang pony yer won fetched down ter der stable 'ere, 'an I got yer as nobby a saddle and rig out as I could scare up; but I don't want yer ter be scootin' 'round der country on 'im till I'se satersfied he's quiet. Versteh?"

"'Nuff said, dad, and I'm dead loads 'bliged ter yer," answered the kid.

"I'll back the boy to ride an' tame a hurricane after yesterday's performance," observed Shanks.

"Sticks on tighter dan a wet postage stamp," said Shorty.

"Oh, me an' der nag'll get 'long stavin', dad. I wouldn't give a kick on der shins for a pony dat couldn't jump over a five-rail fence, kick a fly off a feller's eyebrow, bite der buttons off his coat an' bust up a camp meetin' in seven seconds," chimed in Shorty Junior.

"If that's your style, I'll be hanged if I don't think you've got the very animal to fill the bill," laughed Shanks.

"'Fi was goin' ter drive der plug in a hearse an' 'ten funerals for a livin' I'd go in for a pokey hoss wid a solemn tail, 'cause I'se 'fraid dat buckshot I was on yesterday 'd kick a hole in der hearse, flop der coffin out an' waltz thro' der mourners on his hind legs wid a funeral plume stickin' in his ear," said the kid.

"I'll stretch yer ear, yer young rascal, till it feels like an elephant's if yer dont' keep quiet," said Shorty laughingly; and a moment later they reached the hotel, and after paying a visit to the billiard hall and knocking the balls around for half an hour, they concluded to retire.

Next morning found our party up betimes, and having hid a good square meal away under their clothing, the question came up of what to do with themselves.

"I vote for a trip across the river and a squint at Council Bluffs," proposed Shanks, offering his cigar case to his little chum.

"I'm 'clined for a balloon 'scurion 'fi could get hold of a stray balloon," laughed Shorty.

"An' I don't vote for neither of dose tickets. I vote for yer ter tak' dis huckleberry up ter der Injun camp ter see dem. Yer and dad can tak' a buggy an' a team of wind splitters an' I'll gum myself on ter der mustanger," said Shorty Junior pertly.

"Dat's not a bad idea, kid, an' I don't keer 'fi do vote for dat," assented Shorty.

"Suits me to a T, T. T. Anything for fun, as the man said when he hit another over the head with the tongs," observed Shanks.

"Den I'll 'tend ter getting the nags," said Shorty, hurrying off to order the pony to be saddled and a pair of clipping good horses to be harnessed to a buggy.

"Shure, he's the divil entirely," said a stableman, on the party entering the stable yard fifteen or twenty minutes later.

"Bad cess to him for a biting, kicking baste. Ain't he afther scrunching the shoulder off me own first cousin, Mike McCarthy," broke in another groom.

"An 'troth and he kicked the wind out of a naygur as foine as iver ye see," added a helper.

"Jist look at him now, sur, but don't stand forninst him, for he'd ate you in a howl minit. Shure which of the gentlemen's going to be afther riding the crature?" said the head groom, putting in an appearance in hopes of a fee, and pointing as he spoke to where the mustang ready saddled, stood tossing his magnificent mane and tail and trying the muscles of two men who were holding him.

"I reckon I'se de jumpin' jack dat's goin' ter do the ridin' part of de biz," said Shorty Junior, stepping forward and standing in front of the snorting beast.

"Murder in Irish! the choild'll be kilt dead!" exclaimed the groom, raising his hands in horror.

"Guess not, Mister Man. Hello, pony, don't yer kno' me, ol' feller?" asked the kid, and the animal, at the sound of his voice, pricked his ears forward, snuffed his clothes, let his face be stroked, and then with a low neigh of recognition, he stood perfectly quiet and allowed Shorty to lift the little rider into the saddle.

"Faix, that bates St. Pathrick and the snakes!" exclaimed the hostler, who had been watching them open-mouthed.

"That horse knows him like a fresh-licked school boy does his alphabet," said Shanks.

"Dat plug ain't goin' ter forget who com' out boss yesterday in a hurry. I tell yer he's a rattler, ain't he?" replied Shorty

as he climbed into the buggy, and they started briskly down the road, the kid, mounted on his mustang, curvetting and prancing alongside.

Half an hour's rapid driving brought them to the Indian encampment, and five minutes after their arrival they were surrounded by all the redskins importuning them to purchase beadwork, bows and arrows and notions.

"Shooter tene cente from stickee," said a buck, pointing to a stick some twenty-five yards distant.

"Le's see yer hit dis den," said Shorty, walking over to the stick and putting a silver quarter into a little slit in the top of it.

"Twang!" went the Indian's bow, a second later, and the silver quarter flew whirling away, struck fairly by the steel pointed arrow.

"Me brave. Me shoote tene cente 'way far," said another who appeared to be a small chief, coming forward and setting the target half as far away again.

"I'll invest a quarter in that," observed Shanks, placing it in the notch.

The Indian carefully selected an arrow from his deer hide quiver that lay against his lodge, and fitting it to his bow and standing erect, threw up the bow, and without apparently taking any aim, let fly, and the quarter was observed flying through the air.

"Dat's shootin', pard, no beefsteak. Lordy, wouldn't I streak it 'fi had one of dem fellers arter me wid a bow an' arrer," remarked Shorty, laughingly.

"Me rider; nice pony," said the chief, coming over to where Shorty Junior sat on his mustang.

"Yer ride nuthin'. Why, dis plug'd stan' yer on yer ear in less dan it takes a tadpole ter wag its tail," replied the kid.

"Oh, me big chief; me ridee; heap big Injun; muchy brave," said the chief.

"You'd be muchy glad to walk if yer tries ter ride dis pony," answered Shorty Junior.

"You let big chief ridee, ugh?" coaxed the Indian.

"Let 'im try 'f yer wants ter; he'll only get der gran' bounce," said Shorty to the kid.

"I'd rather be a freshly-lit skyrocket than I would be him," grinned Shanks.

"Here yer be, den, an' 'f yer ain't der wust sucked in Injun in der west yer can use me for a goose feeder for the rest of my life," said the boy, slipping off and handing the bridle to the chief.

"Nice pony, goodee ridee," grunted the Indian, swinging himself into the saddle with a bound, amid the applause of his tribe.

"Yup, go! Yup hee, goh!" he exclaimed as soon as he felt himself seated in the saddle.

The mustang, who had stood as quiet and still during the exchange of riders as if he had been carved out of marble, started when he heard the strange voice, and with a weird snort of terror he sprang forward with a few rapid bounds, then, arching his back like a cat, he stopped short, sending the unfortunate chief flying head first through the air.

"Not so muchee ridee as formerly," said the kid as he caught the bridle of the pony, and they roared with laughter as they watched the Indian crawling up, after plowing up the grass with his nose and chin.

"High ugh, mucky mucky, want ter try 'im ag'in?" laughed Shorty as he saw the Indian scrambling to his feet and staring around blankly.

"Me ridee, damnee. No good pony; heap pitchee, big chief ridee, ugh!" exclaimed the redskin, throwing off his blanket and approaching the mustang, knowing that if he did not succeed in mastering the animal, he would forever lose caste in the tribe.

"Want ter try 'im ag'in, hey? Dis time I 'spect he'll pitch yer so high dat yer'll mak' a hol' in der clouds," said Shorty.

"I think it'll be big chief stand on his headee," remarked Shanks.

"Bounce 'im, scalpy, an' yer bet yer moccasins he'll bounce yer in return," grinned Shorty Junior.

"Ugh! poh! me ridee," grunted the chief, making a leap to get in the saddle, but just then the mustang moved ahead, and the Indian came down kerfummix on the ground.

"Ki, owoshoki!" he yelled, jumping up as mad as seventeen hornets that had been tickled with a stick, while our party fairly shook themselves with laughter.

The next time the redskin approached the mustang carefully, watched his opportunity and succeeded, with the assistance of one of the tribe in getting mounted. Then, seizing the bridle reins with a great flourish, he dug his heels into the pony's sides and gave a yell of triumph, which died away into a groan of terror as the mustang, after standing up straight on his hind legs for a few minutes, dropped down again with a thud that loosened every joint in his rider's body, and then, bounding forward, kicked up behind and shot the unlucky chief through the opening of one of the lodges and into the fire-place,

where the dinner was cooking, and the next moment the pony, as if feeling that he owed the whole tribe a grudge, galloped in among them, kicking, pawing, biting and scattering bucks, braves, squaws, warriors, chiefs, papposes and medicine men helter skelter in every direction.

"Christopher Columbus! my ribs are sore from laughing!" roared Shanks, as he looked at fat squaws and grave, dignified warriors turning somersaults over each other, while the mustang amused himself by kicking chiefs and bucks as hard as if their rank was equal, shaking papposes and medicine men with his teeth and demoralizing the whole village as if an earthquake had struck it.

"Dere goes muchy ridee!" shouted the kid as the chief darted out of the lodge in a half roasted condition from rolling head over heels in the burning cinders of the fire-place.

"Big chief, wanty ridey," said Shorty as he rushed past them.

"Ugh! d—n!" yelled the unlucky redskin, galloping madly off toward the rear of the village.

"Look a dere, dad!" called out the kid, pointing to an old squaw that the mustang had kicked headforemost into a chief's stomach, and the latter was now dancing around in agony, with both hands pressed over the injured spot.

"Dat'll do 'im more good dan a mustard plaster," laughed Shorty, and having caught the mustang, Shorty Junior mounted him, and bidding farewell to the Indian village, they drove back to town, laughing heartily over their racket.

After having played to bang-up houses for the rest of their stay in Omaha, the troupe received the order to pack up and get ready to dust to Indianapolis, where they had been heralded to appear through the press and billposter.

"Once more we're pointin' our noses toward sunrise," remarked Shorty as they dumped themselves down in one of the Chicago and Rock Island cars.

"That shows that we knows our biz," replied Shanks, fanning himself with his hat.

"Whoever spits out such a 'bomnible joke spot 'im on der shoot."

"Or paste 'im in der snoot, dad," said Shorty Junior.

"Hold on, fellows, I've got one to ask you. Why's the town we're going to like a sleepy-headed redskin?" asked Dave Reed.

"'Cause he can't climb a tree," suggested Shanks.

"'Cause Barnum's hunting up Charley Ross," said Tambo.

"'Cause Russia has got Kars as well as dis railroad," grinned Shorty.

"'Cause der longest pole knocks down der persimmons," lisped the kid comically.

"Because you're a lot of blamed idiots, I s'pose I'll have to tell you," laughed Dave Reed. "Well, it's like a sleepy-headed redskin 'cause it's Indian-apolis."

"Open der car door, som' one, an' let der cool air fan dis man's fevered brow," shouted Shorty.

"Where's the nearest lunatic asylum located?" asked Shanks.

"Send for a coroner. Let's cut 'im open and see if dere's any more bad jokes like that left in him," suggested Shorty.

"You fellows can cod away till you catch a fresh fish. I'm going to sleep," laughed Dave, and settling himself in his seat, he closed his eyes lazily.

"Dat's my grip, too," said Shorty, and the rest of the troupe, following his example, stretched themselves out and killed part of the journey by a sound nap.

"Change cars for Indianapolis!" yelled the conductor, waking them up with a start.

"What's der use of changin'? Dis one suits me 'zactly," said Shorty, innocently.

"But you'll be left," explained the conductor.

"Dat wouldn't be right."

"Are you a born fool?" shouted the man of fares, getting excited.

"I dunno. Are you?"

"Get out of this car before I fire you out!" exclaimed the now angry conductor.

"I thort yer was der conductor, but 'pears yer der fire-man," said Shorty wittily.

"Are you going to leave?"

"I ain't a tree, consequently I don't hav' ter leave. D'yer twig dat jibe? If yer do, bow," coddled Shorty, getting up slowly and moving out after the rest of the troupe.

"It's a wonder that fellow didn't club you for chinning him," said Shanks as they squatted themselves in the poorly equipped cars of the Indianapolis Railroad.

"I'd a made 'im t'ink he was a litenin' conductor in a thunderstorm 'f he had."

"Ice water for two and a pink straw for the ladies. Shorty's made a joke and somebody ought to conduct him out into the fresh air," laughed Shanks.

"Money, gentlemen," said the new conductor.

"Can't we tick-et on dis route?" asked Shorty, pulling out the pasteboards from his pocket.

The conductor smiled a sickly smile and said as he punched them:

"I'll treat this party to a punch."

"As I don't keer 'bout bein' punched, yer can fetch me a tender peanut on ice," said the kid.

"And a straw to suck it through," chimed in Tambo.

"D'yer want ter mak' me out ter be a sucker?" grinned the kid.

"Maybe you didn't suck those Indians in with your mustang. Oh, you're a regular chip of the old block," answered Tambo, and a broad smile stole over the faces of Shorty, Shanks and the boy as they thought over the affair.

Coddling, joking and laughing in this manner, the time slipped by so rapidly that they were surprised when the conductor threw open the door and shouted:

"Indianapolis!"

"Baker House?" inquired a sunburned native, with a red nose and an immense badge.

"Dat's der dough for dis crowd" replied Shorty, following him to Louisianco street, where they found a stage awaiting them.

A nice suite of apartments had been set apart for them at the hotel, and after overhauling their toilets and stowing away a good dinner Shorty and Shanks, accompanied by the kid, strolled out for a ramble around the city.

"Ho, boy, I'll be honeyswoggled if 'ere been't a chap 'tain't no bigger dan a pickle bottle!" shouted a country boy.

"Wal, I swow he been't Tom Thumb, be he?" asked the other, running across the street and regarding our little hero with staring eyes and open mouth.

"By gum, I'll bet you a mushmelon that he's one of them show fellers that's comin' 'ere," remarked a third, hitching up his blue overalls.

"Say, fellers, I'd lik' ter hire dem moufs of yers for cellars, ter keep taters in," said the kid.

"I'll be dogoned if he can't talk!" giggled one of the rustics.

"And give sarse, too," said another.

"He'd better not say noffin' to me or I'll mow him all to bits," chimed in the third.

"Say, hadn't yer softies better swim out 'fore it's over yer head? Tak' a waltz hom' ter der farm an' help yer granny ter chaw beans for der mornin' hash. 'Fi was as green as yer I'd hide under der barn 'feared der cows 'd scoop me in," said Shorty Junior saucily as they walked away.

Their first visit was to the Union Depot, where they found that the mustang, which had been railroaded on in a box car, had arrived and been transferred to a livery stable. From the depot they took a spin up to the Academy of Music and had a glimpse of its seating capacity, stage and things in general.

"It's a bully good little ranch, and 'f der folks only turn out an' fill it, it'll suit me lik' a fat frog does an alligator—all ter smithereens—but I don't tak' much stock in dis town. It's ter slow. Dere aint' any of der New York get up an' howl, pitch in an' drag out sort of life," remarked Shorty, squinting around.

"Oh, I don't know. I've got an idea by the tail that it may pan out hunky," replied Shanks.

"Can't we start some hoodlum racket, dad, dat'd catch der dimes?" asked the kid, sagely.

"Dat's jest what I was thinkin' 'bout, Chip. But dey all 'pears ter be so sleepy headed and slouchy dat I ain't seed der ghost of a show yet" said his paternal quickly.

"I'll keep my eyes skinned, an' if anythin' turns up yer bet, gov'ner, I'll snatch it by der eyebrows!"

Just as they were leaving the theatre a darkey drove up with a farm wagon containing half a dozen empty baskets, and, halting in front of the building, jumped out and ran into a saloon for a drink.

"Hol' on, dad, an' I'll show yer some fun," said the kid, darting over and secreting himself under one of the bushel baskets.

A few minutes later the darkey came gliding out, smiling and wiping his lips, and, mounting the wagon, was in the act of driving off when a voice shouted:

"Hol' on dere!"

"Whoa dar!" said the darkey, bringing his team to a stop and looking around.

"Come over yere; I want ter see yer," said the voice, and the negro flew around on his seat as if it worked on a pivot and stared to the right and left.

"Com', stir yer stumps," observed the mysterious voice, and the darkey pulled off his dilapidated straw hat and scratched his woolly head.

"Back up!" said Shorty Junior from under the basket.

"All right, boss, but dis yeah 'fair ain't 'zactly cl'ar ter dis nig's unferstan'in'. I'se in a sorter hurry, boss, an' if ye'll 'scuse me, I guess mebbe I'd better be gwine," answered the bewildered driver, gazing around, after having backed his team up to the walk.

"Pay for dat drink yer got!"

"Fore de Lord! I cl'ar ter goodness I did, boss."

"Der money was bad."

"Shuah, boss? 'cause dat money was gib ter me by der ol' woman ter buy corset lacin's wid," exclaimed the darkey solemnly.

"Go 'head, den."

But no sooner had the darkey started his team ahead than a voice behind him shouted:

"Stop wher' yer be, or I'll hav' yer in jail 'fore yer kno' it."

"Yes, sah, I'll stop, sah!" exclaimed the darkey, reining up shortly and looking around. Failing to find any one, he continued: "Eider dat drink dat I tuk in dat s'loon was pow'ful strong or else dere's spirits loafin' 'roun dis nig. Fust it's go 'head den it's hol' on, an' der wust of it is dat dere's no one 'roun' 'tall."

"Now, den, back der wagin up an' tak' out der tail board so's I can get in," said the kid.

"Dat settles it, an' I'se a gone nig. Back up de wagin ter let a ghost in!" moaned the darkey.

"If yer don't mind me, I'll com' an' wind my arms 'round yer."

"Not much yer won't, if dis nig can help it!" shouted the terrified darkey, springing from his seat and rushing down the street bare-headed, while Shorty Junior crawled from under the basket and joined his dad and Shanks, who were laughing fit to kill themselves over the racket.

There was a ripping good house assembled to meet the New York Minstrels that evening, the fame of the troupe having preceded them, and even Shorty was forced to confess that the boys of Indianapolis had turned out well. The performance was excellent and applauded to the echo. Shorty Junior, in a song and dance taught him by Dave Reed, was simply immense and brought down the house.

"Dat kid's goin' ter mak' a rushin' ol' song an' dancer," remarked Shorty as he watched the little shaver go through his performance.

"Song and dance? Why, that chick's going to be a boss at the business, if he only get's half a shake," answered Shanks, who was standing in one of the wings watching him.

"Well he'll get all der show he wants. I'll tackle Dave tomorrow an' hav' 'im teach der kid all he's up ter; den when he gets East, I'll scare up der best of der bosses in dat line dere, an' let dem bounce 'im 'roun' till he's fixed," explained Shorty to his friend, and a few moments later they parted, as the former had to go upon the stage in his monkey act.

CHAPTER X.

Much better houses than even Shorty had looked for greeted the New York Minstrels during their stay in Indianapolis. The reputation of the troupe and the comicalities and rackets of the two Shortys had floated ahead of them, and the farmers of the neighborhood made a regular picnic of their stay. Driving into the city with their families and a basket of luncheon, they attended each performance and nearly choked themselves to death with laughter and ginger bread. Shorty Junior was the favorite from the jump, especially among the ladies of the audience, who baked pies and ginger bread big enough for him to have made a house of, and left them at the theatre and hotel with the request that the poor little child might be allowed something to eat so that he'd grow.

"I'se eber so much 'bliged ter dem, but I ain't got but one stumjack an' dat ain't's big as a wheelbarrow. I'll have ter weaken an' call der game," said the kid on their return to the hotel one evening to find a pie as big as a bandbox awaiting him.

"Guess dey tak' yer for a whole Sunday-school 'scursion. Dem's der tuffest folks ter fill up dat's out. Tak's more solid ol' grub for ter stuff a Bible classer dan it does ter feed a cage of lions in a mernagerie, and der wust of it is dat dey looks hungrier an' hollower dan ever after dey's thro'," remarked Shorty humorously.

"You're as level-headed as a billiard-table, pard," laughed Shanks, throwing himself down carelessly on the sofa and springing up again with the exclamation of:

"Suffering saints!"

"What in blazes is der riot now?" asked Shorty as he saw his tall friend waltzing around the room with his coat tails in his hands and a wild look of pain and anger struggling for the mastery in his countenance.

"Riot enough! Great Columbus, how'd you like to squat yourself in a dish of hot blackberry jam?" yelled Shanks, snatching a paper knife off the mantel-piece and scraping the hot jelly off of his pants, while Shorty, overcome by the comicality of the affair, lay back in his chair and roared with laughter, in which the kid joined.

"That's some more fodder I s'pose, for our grub-struck chick!" exclaimed Shanks wildly.

A fresh roar of laughter was all the answer he received.

"Terrible funny, ain't it, to see a feller scald himself in some of your confounded old charity feeds?" he asked, excitedly.

"Was it hot?" inquired the kid, with a broad grin on his funny little face.

"I'd make it so hot for the person who put it there that he'd like to make a trial trip down below to get cool," replied Shanks, hauling off his trousers to exchange them.

He had just succeeded in relieving himself of his lower garments and was turning to his wardrobe to take out another pair when the door opened and a female voice exclaimed:

"Coom along, gals; I found the room. So coom rite in an' fotch your fixin's an' cookies."

"Illuminated lightning bugs!" yelled Shanks, giving one scared glance around and then making a frantic dive for behind the bed, under which he crawled with a groan and the loss of a couple of inches of skin off his backbone.

"You see, me and the gals bin up to your show an' laughed, till we'd like to bust, didn't we, gals? An' being as we coom to town to-night again, we fatched you some cakes, an' thort we'd like to call on you; 'feared you'd be sorter lonesome," explained the old lady.

"T'ank yer. 'Low me ter pass yer som' chairs," answered Shorty.

There was a low groan from under the bed, and the girls started and looked around.

"Dat's nuthin' 'cept a loose board. Just flounce yerselves down an' spend der evening, an' we'll hav' lots of fun," said Shorty, grinning to himself at the thought of Shanks' predicament.

A deep sigh was heard, and the old lady, after putting on her spectacles and glancing around, observed:

"I hope you don't keep no ghosts or goblin' things round you?"

"No, ma'am-e-e! We ain't on der ghost lay. We leave all dat ter der spiritool gangs an' stick ter der burnt cork," replied Shorty.

"That's right, for the gals an' me are dreadful 'feared of speerits, been't we, gals?"

The girls in question, a pair of plump, buxom lasses of sixteen and eighteen potato-bug seasons, shrugged their fair shoulders, rolled their eyes up like ducks in a thunderstorm, drew long-breaths in and gasped in a chorus:

"Oh, been't we!"

"An' now how shall we spend der ebening? What d'yer all say ter som' kind of fun?"

The girls giggled and the old lady smiled her willingness to enter into any game.

"Nov, den, what shall it be?" asked Shorty, when the girls had removed their bonnets.

"How'd hide-an'-go-seek pan out, pop?" asked the kid.

"Splendid," said the girls in one breath.

"Der very t'ing, an' I'll be it fust. Now yer can hide any place yer want ter in dese two rooms while I counts a square hundred," cried Shorty, while a broad grin stole over his comical old mug as he heard his chum under the bed mumble:

"Great heavens! how I wish I was a long-tailed mouse or a brown bedbug that wouldn't require any pantaloons."

"Now, den, scoot it, an' hide yerselves, an' giv' a whoop when yer all fixed," said Shorty, pretending to hide his face in a chair, but keeping his weather eye peeled to see the fun.

"Where you going to hide?" asked one of the girls.

"I think I'll take the closet. Let's hurry," answered her sister.

"Where you going to stow?"

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know."

"I'll tell yer wher' dere's a hunky place," whispered Shorty Junior.

"Wher, wher?"

"Jess yer scramble under dat bed an' lay low, an' der ol' man'll never tumble ter yer," advised the kid.

"I'll go, but don't you ever tell," whispered the girl, and tripping across the room, she stooped down, and before Shanks could divine her purpose, she had crawled under the bed and was pawing around to make herself comfortable, when she accidentally touched Shanks, and the next moment you would have thought there was a bear fight going on under that couch. Shrieks, yells, curses, apologies, groans, moans, sobs, explanations, and the next moment a man and a girl were seen scrambling out from under the bed and darting around the room like a couple of raving lunatics.

"Oh, you villain! My daughter! my daughter!" screamed the old lady, charging over at Shanks.

"Madam," cried Shanks, "just let me—"

"Don't you dare to madam me, you wretch!" exclaimed the old lady, trying to snatch Shanks by the nose.

"But how in thunder could—"

"I'll thunder you, you vagabond! To think you'd dare appear before a daughter of mine in that manner!" yelled the old woman, chasing him around the centre table and jumping over the lounge to get hold of him.

"Darn you and your daughters! Let me get my trousers!" roared Shanks as he dodged about the room.

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed the girls, hiding their blushing faces in their hands.

"Fie, fie, Shanks!" grinned Shorty, who had been shaking himself with convulsions of laughter.

"I'll tear every hair in your head out, you monster, you!" roared the old lady, trying to get her long enemy up in a corner, but Shanks scampered over the bed and called back:

"For heaven's sake, let me get my——"

"Oh, you base fellow! My poor daughters! my daughters!" she interrupted.

"Skin it, Mister Shanks! She's a-glidin' for yer wool. Streak it, or she'll nab yer!" yelled the kid, who had perched himself up on the mantel-piece and was enjoying the fun and urging on first one and then the other.

"The devil fly away with you and your daughters! It's my pants I want," answered Shanks, trying to get to his wardrobe; but being headed off by the old woman, he took refuge behind the sofa.

"Slip downstairs an' tell der landlord dat dere's a lot of 'scaped loonyticks got inter my room, and dat I want him ter fetch up his help an' capture dem. D'yer savey?" whispered Shorty to the kid as he lifted him down from the mantel-piece.

"I'll fly, ol' un!" answered the shaver, winking his eye comically and skipping out of the door.

"Merciful heavens, woman! ain't you going to let me dress myself?" demanded Shanks from behind the sofa.

"I'll dress you, you scoundrel!"

"Oh, I shall faint, I know I will."

"I'll die! I'll die!" screamed the girls, getting up and hiding their blushing noses on each other's shoulders.

"Say, Shanks, why didn't yer let us know dat yer was under dere?" asked Shorty, innocently.

"Oh, I'll pay you up for this. I'll get square—see if I don't," shouted Shanks, making another shirt-tail dive for the wardrobe, closely pursued by the old lady, who, in chasing him, ran into the girls and set them shouting at the top of their lungs just as the door was shoved wide open and the landlord, followed by half a dozen citizens, rushed into the room, and stood for a moment gazing around.

We will drop a curtain over the explanations that followed. Shorty had, with his usual cuteness, slipped out the moment the door was opened, leaving the others to explain matters as best they could. How the affair was eventually settled and the visitors got rid of he never exactly learned, for though Shanks, after it was all over, took it all in good part, still one could easily see it was a tender spot that he didn't care to be touched upon.

"Dad," said the kid the next morning, "I wish yer'd let me give der pony a scoot dis mornin'. We're both itchin' for a run."

"Feared yer'll have ter scratch yerself some oder way dan hoss-ridin' den, for I've got heaps of t'ings ter 'tend ter ter-day, an' biz is biz, yer know," answered Shorty, looking up from a letter he was reading.

"Sugar, guv. Can't I waltz 'im out jes' as good 'lone 's if yer was speeling 'longside me in a buggy? Yer ort ter have took it in by dis time dat I ain't no slouch on der ride," coaxed the shaver.

"All right, Chip, all right; only don't be gone long an' don't let Buster (for that was the name they had christened the mustang by) chuck yer," answered Shorty, winding up, as he almost always did, in giving way to the boy.

"Never struck der hoss dat could do dat, dad. Well, I t'ink I'll skip over ter der stable an' get der men ter sling der saddle on ter 'im. So long, dad," said the kid a few moments later.

"So long," answered his paternal, and the boy trotted over to the stable, sought out the hostler, had Buster led forth and saddled, and away he dashed, both horse and rider seeming to enjoy their holiday.

"Faix and troth that's the first time Dennis Sullivan iver knew that monkeys could talk and ride. Begorra, it's a quare country intirely. The next thing those grasshopping crathurs 'll be skipping up an' standin' up on their long, skinny back legs forninst me, ax me for the loan of a pipe of tobaky," soliloquized the hostler as he watched the kid galloping off.

"Who took that black mustang out?" inquired the proprietor of the stable, coming in a few minutes later and noticing the empty stall.

"Shure an' 'twas a monkey, sur," replied Dennis.

"A what?"

"No, not a phat, but a monkey all dressed up loike a human being."

"What in the dickens did you let him have him for? That horse belongs to Mr. Shorty."

"Bejabbers, an' this one's short enough to suit anything."

"But the horse may be ruined."

"Divil a doubt of it. Sure, the loikes of that thing'd ruin a

tombstone; he nearly made me cross-eyed in both feet lookin' at him," answered Dennis.

"Then why in thunder did you let him have the animal?" demanded the proprietor angrily.

"Shure an' he walked in here as bould as a two-tailed lion, cocked his wee ould head to one side, and sez he:

"'Rush out the mustang, Paddy!'

"The who?"

"'Busther,' sez he.

"'Bust who?"

"'I mane my plug,' sez he.

"'Shure, this aint' a hat store.'

"'Take a tumble,' sez he.

"'That'd I take a tumble for? Shure that's quare fun.'

"Then he grinned till I thought the top of his head was coming off loike the lid of a snuff-box, and he walked in and pointed out the black, and towld me to saddle him, and when he was ready, faix he skipped on to him loike a daisy, and away wid him loike a fairy," explained the hostler, scratching his head and going back to his work, while his employer started over to the hotel to see Shorty and inform him of the occurrence.

In the meantime Shorty Junior was having a bully old time. Once outside of the city, he let Buster, who had been fretting, prancing and chafing under the restraint with which he was held back, have a free rein, and the splendid animal, tossing up his head, bounded forward like a shot, fairly spurning the earth with his feet, while his game little rider laughed, and, leaning forward, patted him on the neck.

"Oh, no, guess not; mebbe he ain't a hummer on the go. Talk 'bout yer wind-splitters, why, he's der boss, dead sure. I wonder how he is on der jump. I t'ink I'll raise him ter der fust four-rail fence dat I strikes," laughed Shorty Junior as he sped along the road like an arrow from a bow.

"Now den, Buster, skip it!" he shouted a few minutes later, turning the mustang's head fair at a four-rail fence by the roadside.

Buster never slacked for a second his wonderful springing gallop, but as he neared the fence he gathered himself together and flew over it like a swallow, leaving some farmers, who were hoeing in the field, petrified with astonishment.

After a rousing old gallop through the country, Shorty Junior turned Buster's head toward home, and they were speeding down a smooth turnpike road like lightning when the kid, chancing to glance ahead, saw a tollgate a short distance in front of him.

"Now den for a lark. Go it, Buster, an' we'll 'stonish der natives out of a year's growth," chuckled the kid, and the mustang, encouraged and urged on by his rider's voice, fairly flew over the ground.

"Hi, thar! Hi! hi! Hol' on!" yelled the tollgate keeper, running out and closing an enormous five-bar oak gate.

"Golly, we're in for it! Five bars dis time, Buster, or we're busted ter flinders," said Shorty Junior as he saw the gate shut before him. Then settling himself firmly in the saddle, he gathered the reins tighter in his tiny hands, closed his knees against his flying steed's sides and dashed straight at it.

"Turn him, or you'll be mashed to pieces! Great heavens! it's a child and I've killed him!" screamed the gatekeeper, turning pale.

"Now, Buster, my bully, up yer go and over it is. Hoorah!" shouted the kid as the noble beast gathered his muscular body together like a cat, gave a mighty spring into the air, and the next moment had landed lightly on the other side and was galloping away as if leaping five-bar tollgates was an every-day performance.

"Yer'll hav' ter stick on anoder bar 'fore yer can collect any toll from dis turn-out—hey, Buster, my boy?" called back Shorty Junior as he rode away.

"Well, dod rot my picture if that don't beat the devil and the Fourth of July rolled into one! Why, he warn't bigger than a stick of peppermint candy. Well, I'll swow to thunder!" exclaimed the astonished tollgate keeper, and he went into the house and fanned himself with a bar of soap in his excitement.

Returning to the city, Shorty Junior reined up Buster and allowed him to walk quietly through the shaded streets and cool off before returning him to the stable.

He had stopped on the main street to speak to one of the troupe whom he met, when a crowd of Indianapolis boys gathered around and commenced coddling him.

"Say, monkey, how d'you get out of your cage?" said one.

"Get off that horse. We don't allow baboons to ride in this town!" jawed another.

"Why don't his mother put the baby to bed?" inquired a third.

"I'll bet he's been in a circus and run away with the pony," suggested a cross-eyed boy.

"He can't put on any frills over us that's what's the matter with Hannah," remarked an inky fingered fellow.

"What's der matter wid yer snufflers? Don't yer get 'nuff ter

eat, don't yer clothes fit yer, or are yer bodered wid worms?" asked the kid, coolly.

"Who's snufflers?"

"How d'you know I don't get enough to eat?"

"What's the matter with our clothes?"

"Who sed we had worms?" they demanded, angrily.

"Say, what's der use of yer workin' yerselves inter der prickly heat? Better take a spin around der block an' stop at som' pump an' pump water over yerselves," said the kid.

"Let's bounce him!" exclaimed a big-headed fellow, who seemed to be a leader among them.

"Let's roll him in the mud!"

"Let's punch his head!"

"Haul him off the pony!"

"We'll learn him who he's sassin'!"

"Dirty little monkey, let's box his ears!"

"I'll give him all the pumping he wants!"

"I'll prickly heat him if I take hold of him once!" they yelled.

"I don't scare worth a cent, an' yer can't bluff me inter nuthin'. I ain't so awful big, but dere ain't one of twice my size dat wants ter pick a muss wid me twice, for I'se tuffer dan whalebone an' I'll stan' more poundin' dan a mule," said the kid defiantly.

"Let's chuck him off that pony!" shouted the leader.

"Yer'd better leave money ter pay yer funeral 'spences 'fore yer commence chuckin'. 'cause dere's likely ter be a sudden death in yer fammerly," said Shorty Junior.

"I'll tell you, fellers, let's all rush in on him at once and snatch him!" proposed a bull-necked boy, with a pug nose, and his proposition was accepted with a cheer by the crowd.

"Better cheese dat rush, you smarties!" warned the kid.

"Cheese nothing! Come fellers, rush him down!" commanded the leader, and with an angry yell they rushed in a body upon our little hero, who would undoubtedly have been overpowered and pounded had he not found an unexpected ally in Buster, who, suddenly dropping his head, let fly with both heels, scattering the gang in every direction and knocking the wind out of every one he could reach.

"Owdy-o-o—I'm killed!" screamed the leader, who had all the fight taken out of him by a square kick between the shoulders.

"I want to go home!" sobbed the bull-necked boy, who was sitting in the gutter nursing his shin.

"I wish'd to Solomon I'd let him alone," howled the cross-eyed boy as he waltzed around with his hands on the seat of his pants.

"Any of yer fellers want ter rush it any more jess lem'me know, an' I'll com' 'round an' we'll hav' lots more fun. Da-da-ta-ta," chuckled the kid, and with a word he rode off, leaving the gang to console each other and gum sticking plaster over their wounds.

Two days later the New York Minstrels dropped the curtain on one of the most successful engagements ever held in that quiet city, and having got their duds packed, their bills paid and their good-byes said, they started once more on the road, bound for Nashville, Tenn., which was the next point at which they were billed to perform.

"Off at last. I hope I haven't forgot anything," said Shanks as he dumped himself into a seat.

"I'll bet you der pearuts for us two dat yer did," answered the kid who had perched himself up on top of a valise and was looking out of the window.

"Done. What was it I forgot?" inquired Shanks, after a short pause, during which he made a rapid mental inventory of his things.

"Yer forgot ter b'd good-bye ter der ol' lady an' gals dat called on yer at der hotel one night, dev'd—"

"Hish! that'll do. Call the peanut boy and I'll pay the racket," whispered Shanks, excitedly.

The train boy was summoned, the kid's pockets filled with peanuts, and that youngster, after bestowing a mysterious and comical wink on Shanks, took his place again by the window, where he amused himself by sucking in confiding strangers with handfuls of peanut shells.

The trip from Indianapolis to Nashville was a long, tedious and dusty one. The route lay through a far farming country, but as the troupe were not much interested in grasshoppers or fertilizers, they amused themselves in their old way—playing cards, singing songs and cracking jokes.

They reached Nashville late in the evening proceeded at once to the Stacy House, where apartments had been secured by their advance agent, and after a hearty supper they retired early, pretty well used up by their trip.

The boys were all up in good season next morning, and after doing justice to a well-cooked and served Tennessee breakfast, they started off in parties to have a look at the city and amuse themselves as well as they could till dinner time.

"Le's me, yer an' der kid sail 'round far as der show house fust an' den we can tak' a spin anywhere yer please," said

Shorty to his friend Shanks as they stood on the hotel steps and lit their smokers.

"Lead on, MacDuffy," answered his chum, and they moved away, with the kid in tow.

On inspection they found the "New" Theatre to be a nice, cozy place of amusement, centrally located and well fitted up, with a good stage and dressing-rooms.

Leaving the theatre, our party visited the capitol, one of the handsomest and finest buildings on the continent, and then returned to the hotel, where they laid off till dinner time.

"Nashville used ter hav' der reputashun of bein' a red-hot town for to show in, so I 'spect dey won't go back on a gang lik' ours, for 'tain't every day der can pick 'em up. D'yer hear me warbling?" said Shorty as he entered the side door of the theatre.

He was right. The Nashville boys didn't go back on him, for when the rag was rung up that evening the house was found ram-jam, packed full of a crowd that knew what good minstrelsy was and expected it.

That they were not disappointed was best shown by the loud and continued applause that greeted each star.

But the kid capped the climax and carried off the honors with his song and dance of "Love Among the Roses," which he rendered capitally, bringing down the house in roars of laughter and shouts of applause.

"Fust t'ing I know dat coon'll win der belt, an' der ol' man'll hav' ter tak' a back seat in der buggy," laughed Shorty as he listened to the cheers his youngster was evoking.

"Well, you know, he's a chip of the old block," said Dave Reed, who stood ready dressed to go on next act.

"Dat's so, but der ol' man's got ter scratch gravel ter hol' his own an' be der boss card if dat kid keeps on humpin' ter der front," answered Shorty, good-naturedly.

The curtain fell that night on a well pleased and satisfied audience. The New York Minstrels had made a hit and were safe for a week of crowded houses.

CHAPTER XI.

"Say, pard, wasn't that just a rattling old house for a first night? We must have everlastingly raked in the ducats," said Shanks as they left the new theatre, Nashville, at the close of the performance.

"Yer shoutin' solid sense chummy. It did pan out like der big bonanza mine. I didn't stop ter count der stamps in der office, but jammed dem inter my pocket till I got back ter der hotel," replied Shorty.

"If dey're too hefty fer yer ter tote, dad, I'll get away wid a 'few of dem, jess ter help yer 'long," piped the kid, who was trying to light a cinnamon cigarette with a patent match.

"Dere ain't much doubt but yer'll get away wid more dan yer share of dem, Chip," laughed Shorty, patting him on the head.

"Yer don't give der shares out 'cording ter der size, d'yer?" asked Chip wittily.

"I wish they did. Then I'd come in for the lion's share," said Shanks.

"An' I'd hav' ter play der mouse an' chuck on crumbs," chirped Chip.

"An' where'bouts does I com' in in dat combination?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, yer can be der president of der savings bank where we plant our sugar. Den yer can bust up like der rest of dem does, skin out on yer ear wid der stamps an' leave der crowd ter go kitin' an' howlin' up Salt River," said the kid knowingly.

"Not for Joseph if he knows it. Dat's a hypercoon ol' job ver puttin' up for me, but I don't 'zactly care ter play checkers with my nose thro' an iron door jess yet," answered Shorty.

"Pshaw! Them fellows never get juggled. They just grease the law's fingers and slip through slick," observed Shanks.

"Now, if it was some poor devil that—"

"Stop! Stand still or we'll club you dead in your tracks!" yelled a voice, and four masked highwaymen, armed with murderous-looking bludgeons, sprang out from the shadow of an old building and placed themselves in front of our little party.

"Guess yer fellers must be in der funeral bizness an' have graveyards of yer own," spoke up Shorty, who was the first to recover from the surprise.

"We don't want any of your chin. Pass over your money!" commanded the biggest of the party, who appeared to be leader and spokesman.

"Oh, yer don't want any of my chin. I'm glad of dat, 'cause it mite spile my beauty 'f yer was ter steal my chin," coddled Shorty, who had now entirely recovered his self-possession and was as cool as an iced cucumber.

"Hand over that swag you took in at your theatre to-night, and be d—d quick about it, too. We didn't come here to joke," said the leader, hoarsely.

"Didn't come here to joke. Well, dat's funny 'nuff ter make a boss laugh. Why, we thought yer were out on some masqueradin' tare."

"Hand over the money or we'll brain you!"

"Hand over nuthin'. Dis crowd ain't der kind dat hands over worth a cent. What yer want yer've got ter come an' take it out of our hides," answered Shorty, pluckily.

"Dat's der talk, dad. Be game clean down ter yer butes. I'll stick ter yer like wax an' neber squeal if dey chaw me up inter mince meat," chirped the kid.

"Slap that d—d brat's mouth, some of you!" yelled the leader of the highwaymen.

"I'll tend to his case and wring his devilish neck for him," answered a big, broad-shouldered ruffian, making a dash for the kid.

"Fust blood for our side!" shouted the kid, suddenly diving into an inside pocket, whipping out the little silver-mounted revolver his dad had bought for him in 'Frisco, and, leveling it at the approaching ruffian, fired, and the fellow staggered back, shot through the shoulder.

"I'm shot! I'm shot!" groaned the wounded robber, crawling off.

"Whoop la! set 'em up ag'in. Dis beats der circus all holler!" exclaimed the kid, exultingly.

"Now's der time for us, pard!" shouted Shorty, taking advantage of the astonishment the shot from such an unexpected quarter had caused among the highwaymen, and ducking his head he leaped forward and butted the leader square in the bread basket, knocking the wind clean out of him, and the next minute they were locked in each other's arms in a deadly struggle.

The other two ruffians rushed forward at Shanks, swinging their bludgeons, and in a moment more he would have been struck senseless to the pavement when "bang!" rang out the tiny pistol again, and one of them dropped his club with a howl of agony as the bullet shattered his wrist. Shanks jumped aside in time to escape the blow the other one aimed at him, and before the robber could recover himself, he closed with him and threw him to the sidewalk.

"Hol' 'im still for jest half a second, dad, till I shoot a hole through his gizzard!" shouted the kid, trotting over to where Shorty and the leader were still struggling for the mastery.

"Hold on! hold on! Don't fire; I'll give up!" exclaimed the robber as he caught a glimpse of the kid dancing around, revolver in hand.

"Drop 'im, dad. I've got him spotted," called out the youngster a moment later.

"Mind yer eye, an' plug 'im if he budges, Chip," said Shorty as he let go of him and stepped back.

"Don't you fret, ol' un, he's my huckleberry," answered the kid, aiming straight at the fellow's brawny chest.

"Say, boy, just point that cursed thing some other way, it might go off," he said when Shorty had run over to help Shanks secure his man.

"Nary point, for I'se 'feared yer'd go off 'stead of der pistol," answered the kid, firmly. "Guess yer must t'ink I'm fresh an' dat yer can play me for a sucker."

The police arrived, as usual, after the trouble was all over. The prisoners were turned over to them, marched to the station-house and unmasked, when they proved to be some desperate characters who had long been the terror of the city and for the arrest of whom a large reward had been offered.

The next morning the Nashville papers blazed forth with a double-leaded description of the attempted robbery, the struggle and the defeat and arrest of the highwaymen, complimenting our friends for their courage, praising the kid up to the skies and thanking them for bringing such noted desperadoes within the clutches of the law.

Of course the newspaper account proved an immense advertisement for the minstrels, and that evening it seemed as if all Nashville had turned out to attend the performance, and the "New" Theatre was packed like herrings in a box half an hour after the doors were opened.

"I'm devilish glad you and the kid have got here, for I was more than half afraid that they'd pull the house down about our ears," said Dave Reed, meeting Shorty and the kid as they came in.

"What's der rumpus 'bout now?" asked Shorty.

"Well, they've been reading that highwaymen business up, and I think they're suffering from a severe attack of Shorty and Chip on the brain," replied Dave.

"Oh, 'f dat's all, dey'll get ober it soon, for I s'pose we'll hav' 'er show up 'fore dey'll keep quiet," said Shorty as he heard his name roared forth by a hundred voices.

"Yes, if you don't want to have us all buried under the ruins of the building."

"Come 'long, kid, den, an' let's get into our rigs," laughed Shorty hurrying off to his dressing-room.

"Shorty!"

"Hey, you, der, fetch out de boy!"

"Shorty! Shorty!" yelled the crowd.

"Was dere anybody whisperin' my name out 'ere, 'cause Chip an' I's generally 'round when we're called, 'specially at meal time?" said Shorty, coming out, leading the kid by the hand.

"Hip, hip, 'rah! and a tiger for der boys that can't be bluffed!" proposed a boy with a red shirt and a spatter of mud on his nose, and they were given with a vim that made the lights dance and the window panes rattle.

"Speech! speech!" rang out from all parts of the house as Shorty and the kid were bowing their acknowledgments.

"Tell us how you got away with them buffers last night!" shouted a front seat boy.

"Yes, and how little Shorty, the boss boy, plugged two of the robbers with his pistol!" shouted another.

"Ladies and fellers," said Shorty, stepping forward to the footlights and looking around comically at the sea of faces before him. "I'se der smallest card in der pack, der littlest tater in der basket an' der lamest cripple in der horsepistol at makin' a speech dat ever was waltzed ter der front. I can't tell yer much of der 'ticlars of de shindy las' nite, 'count of my 'tention bein' occupied mos' of der time in tryin' ter keep a big snoozer from chokin' me dat I hadn't time ter tak' many notes. It was a sorter lively ol' quadrille while it lasted, but dey hadn't der sand in der craws an' squealed jes' as soon as we got der drop on ter 'em. I 'spect dey picked us up for a lot of flats; but 'f dey did, dat's where dey slipped up wid both feet. Der kid showed up game an' got in som' purty work wid his shootin' iron. In fact, 'f it hadn't been for Chip, dey'd hav' made g-o-n-e goslings of us."

Shorty's speech was received with shouts of applause and three rousing, roof-raising cheers were given for Shorty Junior, the boss boy, as they bowed themselves off the stage.

That night as Shorty was leaving the theatre he was surprised to find a bodyguard of some twenty boys drawn up in line and waiting to see him in safety to the hotel.

"Hello, fellers! what's all dis sojerin' for? Goin' ter hav' a moonlite parade?" asked Shorty, glancing admiringly along the line of young, active forms, bright eyes and laughing faces.

"We're the Shorty Guards, and we're going to see you safe home to the hotel. We mayn't be pretty to look at, but ther's one thing dead sure, dere won't be any of them tramps bouncing you while we're around," said a manly, well-built little fellow, stepping to the front.

"T'ank yer, boys, t'ank yer. Dis is a big compliment ter name der company after me, an' I'm more'n 'bliged. I used ter t'ink dat Shanks an' I were ol' and ugly 'nuff ter paddle our own canoes," replied Shorty, pleasantly.

"Attention, guards! Fours right, march!" commanded the young captain, and the boys wheeled like veterans, and marching around, took up their places as an escort, and away they all started for the hotel, arriving at which they gave three hearty cheers for Shorty, and left him.

"Well, what do you think of the guards?" asked Shanks as they were smoking a cigar before retiring.

"I t'ink dey're 'bout as bright an' smart a lot of boys as you'll pick up anywhere. I'm goin' ter tak' der money dat der city pays for gobblin' dem robbers an' buy dem just as snifty a rig-out of a uniform as yer want to look at," answered Shorty.

"A bully, good idea, pard!" exclaimed Shanks enthusiastically.

Shorty was not one of the kind that let grass grow under their feet. Before noon the next day he had everything fixed.

The boys had been measured, and twenty gay uniforms of scarlet and gray, with gold braiding, were under way to be finished the next morning. Twenty light breech-loading rifles with belts, boxes and the outfit complete, had been purchased and stored in a room which they proposed to use for an armory, and twenty boys known as the Shorty Guards were dancing and rushing around the city delirious with joy and excitement.

"I t'ink, dad, dat dey ort ter hav' som' kind of a flag ter fly," suggested Shorty Junior, who had taken as much interest, if not more than his paternal in getting the boys fixed up.

"By jingo, dat's so, Chip. Le's tak' anoder spin downtown an' get dem ter work on it ter once," replied his dad, and away the pair started again.

"I'm afraid, sir, we couldn't have it ready for you anyway by the time you mention. Why, we'd have to work all night," said the proprietor of the store where they called.

"Den yer'll hav' ter work all night, or if yer don't somebody else will, for der flag's got ter be done, so jest put that in your pipe and smoke it. Yer can tell yer hands, tho', dat if dey'll do der sittin' up I'll do der puttin' up, let der racket cost what it will," answered Shorty, decisively.

"That's quite sufficient, my dear sir. I think now I can safely guarantee it ready at the hour you desire," said the store-keeper, obsequiously, and he kept his word.

Ten o'clock the next morning found the Shorty Guards all assembled at the armory and busier than bees, trying on their new uniforms, which had just been sent home, fitting on their belts, going through the "manual of arms" with their bright

little rifles and chattering, laughing and singing like forty thousand magpies.

"Now get yourselves into your own war harness, fellows, for the band'll be here to escort us down to the hotel at eleven sharp," said the little captain, flying around among his men, fixing a belt here, buckling a strap there, arranging this one's plume and showing the next one the proper slant for his rifle at a "right shoulder arms."

The parade was a decided success.

The appearance of the boys in their handsome and showy new uniforms, glistening rifles and neat equipments, led off as they were by the best band in the city, caused a big sensation among the citizens, who crowded the sidewalks along their line of march and warmly applauded their excellent marching and soldierly appearance.

Reaching the Stacy House, from every window of which fluttered handkerchiefs and waved flags, the boy guards passed in review before Shorty, after which compliment their youthful commander drew them up in line facing the hotel, and Shorty Junior advancing, presented the captain with a beautiful crimson silk standard, upon which was embroidered in gold the words:

"SHORTY GUARDS.

Presented by
SHORTY JUNIOR."

"Capt'in an' fellers, when I hands ober dis flag ter yer keepin', I duz it feelin' dead sure dat I'se givin' it ter lot of as squar' an' plucky a lot of boys as dis town can rake up, if yer was ter hunt 'er ober wid a fine-tooth comb," said the kid as he handed over the flag.

The young captain received it, and in a few well chosen sentences thanked the little donor for his magnificent gift and promised to treasure and defend it. The band struck up, the crowd cheered, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the guards, after presenting arms, wheeled to the left and marched back to their armory.

Full houses was no name for the jammed audiences that crowded the "New" Theatre nightly during the rest of the New York Minstrels' engagement, and Shorty would have gladly remained over another week had not all the arrangements been made and the troupe billed and advertised through the papers to appear that week in New Orleans; so there was nothing left for them but to pack up their traps, say good-bye and skip off on their ears.

There was quite a turn out to see the troupe off. The Shorty Guards paraded with every member present, escorted our party to the depot and started them off with three ringing cheers.

"Well, there's another crowd of tiptop fellers met and left," remarked Shanks as the train whisked out of the depot.

"For dey were jolly good fellers.
Which nary body can deny,"

sang out Shorty as he fixed a bed for himself and the kid on two seats.

"Give that calf more rope," sang out one of the troupe.

"Wait till we get to New Orleans and I'll buy you a jewsharp," observed Shanks.

"Blaze 'way, fellers, der kid an' I's turned in for a snooze," answered Shorty, laughingly.

The run from Nashville to New Orleans was made without any incident worthy of chronicling. The country through which they passed was as brown, dusty and flat as a Long Island farmer, and the boys passed most of their time sleeping, and were only too glad when the conductor shouted New Orleans.

Stages were in waiting at the Levee to convey them to the St. Charles Hotel, where a splendid suite of apartments had been set aside for their accommodation.

"Say, dad, can I giv' Buster a spin 'round der town dis afternoon? I'd lik' ter see der place," asked the kid as they were getting up from one of those splendid little lunches the St. Charles always sets out.

"I'm most afeared ter let yer go scootin' 'round on dat nag, but f'yer sure yer can boss 'im, go 'head," answered Shorty, and the kid trotted off, kissing his hand to Shanks and sticking his fingers to his nose at some of the rest of the troupe.

Five minutes later he astonished the livery stable proprietor by walking in and saying:

"Com', ol' curry combs, bounce a saddle on Buster an' snake 'im out of der stall till I yank 'im 'bout a little."

"Beeswax an' bulgines! you don't mean to say you're going to ride that whirlwind of a beast," said the man, staring at him open-mouthed.

"Dat's jest der size of it, boss. So trot 'im out. I guess he won't whirl me very bad," replied the kid.

"All right, youngster. There's an undertaker's on the next block that keeps his hearse here that'll be glad of the job. I'll

run over and speak to him after you're gone, and as for me—why, you depend upon my sending the best carriages I've got to your funeral," remarked the man as he put the tiny saddle and bridle on Buster and led him forth.

"Don't yer buy any crape jest yet, ole hossfly, an' 'fi was yer I wouldn't spekulat in any of dem black-bordered han'kerchiefs till yer get der latest returns," grinned Chip as he settled himself in the saddle, patted Buster on his satin-coated neck and rode away.

After a pleasant canter around the city and a look at the Custom House, Mint, Odd Fellows' and Masonic halls and the different parks with which the city is dotted, Shorty Junior turned his pony's head toward the stable and was proceeding quietly through Lafayette street when a burly negro policeman hailed him with:

"Sa', boy, war d'ye get dat hoss from?"

"How much w'ud yer giv' ter find out?" inquired Chip, saucily.

"See yeah, chile, I don't want no imperdence gib ter me in my 'fishzul kerpacity," said the cop, swelling out his chest and trying to look dignified.

"I guess yer 'fishyul kerpacity' is cleaning der guts out of fish down dere at Poydras Market," coddled the kid as he let Buster walk slowly along under the shade trees.

"See yeah, boy, if I heah ye chuckin' any moah ob dem deflections or insinuations 'gainst my karracter I'll 'rest ye, suah!" exclaimed the cop, angrily.

"Yer'll arrest yer grandmammy! What d'yer tak' me for, a sardine? Guess yer better tak' a spin 'long yer beat an' get some feller ter giv' dat wolly head of yern a shampoo wid a stable broom," said the kid.

"I warned ye onct, chile, not ter sass or fool wid me. It's my 'pinion dat ye stole dat hoss."

"It's my 'pinion yer a black idiot an' ort ter be cut up for catfish bait," replied Shorty Junior, indignantly.

"Fore de Lord, I'se gwine ter 'rest ye foah dat!" shouted the now infuriated cop, making a rush for and grasping hold of the bridle, a familiarity that Buster resented by snatching away a mouthful of his coat collar and flesh.

"Oh! ow—ow—ouch—owdy—ow! D—n de hoss!" yelled the darkey cop, dancing around in the middle of the road.

"Dat's nuthin'," roared the kid; "jest yer watch 'im kick a fly off yer ear," and as he spoke he wheeled Buster around, touched him in the flanks with his heels, and the next moment the cop found himself turning somersaults in the road with a sensation of having been struck between the shoulders by a pile driver.

"Dere, I guess dat receipts der bill, an' yer won't be in such a hurry accusing der nex' feller of hoss stealin'," said the kid, galloping away like the wind and leaving the cop sitting in the middle of the road rubbing his head and trying to remember how it all came about.

New Orleans proved no exception to the other cities visited, for a full house welcomed the New York Minstrels, and the frequent and hearty bursts of applause gave evidence that the audience was well pleased with the performance. Shorty and the kid, of course, came in for the hit of the evening. The boys of the Crescent City had heard and read of their rackets till they were just wild to catch a glimpse of them, and their appearance was the signal for a mighty shout of welcome that made the old Academy of Music tremble. Taken altogether, their opening night was a decidedly flattering one in the extreme, considering that "stars" of the first magnitude were playing to empty seats at the other theatres.

"Wonderful house that, wasn't it?" said Shanks, meeting Shorty as he passed to his dressing room to change his rig.

"It's der boys as usual done der biz. I tell yer, pard, if yer only use der boys white, an' yer can get dem ter cotton ter yer wunst, yer all hunky-dory high-cockalorum, boss duck in der puddle," laughed Shorty, hurrying away to change.

CHAPTER XII.

Our readers will remember that we left our fun-loving little friends, Shorty and Shorty Junior, in New Orleans, where they were playing to full houses and having a hunky good time generally.

Stopping at the St. Charles Hotel at the same time was a pompous, portly, loud-voiced, big-headed agent for a patent clothes-pin company, who had rendered himself very obnoxious to the rest of the guests by the airs he put on and his habit of eternally intruding himself where he wasn't wanted and interviewing everybody on the merits of his "patent self-acting, double-ender clothes-pin."

"Now, you see, my undersized and unattractive-looking fellow," said Puffit, interrupting a conversation between Shorty

and Shanks, "this patent, self-acting clothes-pin of ours has but to be seen to be appreciated. Once brought within the circle of your families it will prove a sweet boon. Let me now invite your earnest and strict attention to its merits."

"Dat's all rite, pard, but we ain't on der clothes-pin lay just now, an' dis makes der forty 'leventh time yer've tackled me 'bout yer darned ol' t'ing," answered Shorty, and he was turning to continue his conversation with Shanks when the latter drew up a chair, tapped him on the shoulder and said:

"It is with gratification that I can look back and see with what giant strides our clothes-pin has leaped to the front. Why, my hearer, notwithstanding that the fate of nations across the ocean are trembling in the balance, the demand for self-acting clothes-pins still increases."

"I wish yer'd balance off on yer ear," said Shorty.

"I will now prove to you by actual statistics that——"

"No, yer won't prove me nuthin'; go an' talk some oder feller ter death."

"Eminent statesmen and celebrated inventors have long been aware of this growing want of the people. This want has been clutched at by our company, and——"

"I'll clutch yer rite by der starboard ear if yer don't skip off an' lem'me 'lone," replied Shorty, getting angry.

Then Mr. Puffit sighed as if his liver was out of order, and hitching his chair over alongside of Shanks, laid his hand upon his head and remarked impressively:

"All of these pins are made by our own firm. They are manufactured, I can assure you, out of the hardest wood, joined in the centre by a regulating spring, and——"

"Wouldn't you have any objections to making a two-legged spring into some other part of the room and giving me a rest? Don't you remember you buzzed me two hours last night?" said Shanks.

"But, perchance, I omitted to mention——"

"You won't omit to mention that I spilled you all over the floor, will you?" demanded Shanks so sternly that Puffit drew his chair back quickly, only to back it over to Shorty again and commence:

"Viewed in a speculative light, there can be no more profitable investment for the keen-eyed financier than our 'patent self-acting, double-ended clothes-pin,' money——"

"I'll double-end yer!" shouted Shorty, jumping up and bestowing a couple of teeth-chattering kicks under the agent's coat tails, amid the laughter and applause of the lookers on.

"Hol' on, dad, an' yer'll see me put up a high ol' job on that snoozer," grinned the kid.

"Bully boy wid a glass eye, but how 're yer goin' ter work it?" asked Shorty.

"Why, der ol' cove he wants me ter get 'im an easy hoss ter ride out ter Carrollton on, an' I'm goin' ter lend 'im Buster," explained the boy.

"Oh, I tumble," laughed his dad.

"Ha! ha! ha! good enough! When's the show coming off?" inquired Shanks.

"Der curtan 'll ring up just as soon's I can hustle myself roun' ter der stable an' get ol' Buster saddled up," answered the kid, darting away to the stable.

"I t'ink dat he'd better pin 'isself on wid a lot of dem patent self-cocking clothes-pins," chuckled Shorty.

"I think that there'll be a vacancy for an agent if Buster gets a fair kick at him, and that there'll be some trouble in picking up all the pieces of this one," replied Shanks.

Ten minutes later the kid reined up Buster in front of the hotel steps and the clothes-pin agent hastened over to meet him.

"What makes the animal look so skittish? I hope he's quiet dispositioned, not but what I can ride anything ever foaled," he said as Buster arched his neck and pawed the ground impatiently.

"Oh, dat's nothin', he knows he's goin' ter carry a big bug, an' it makes 'em sorter proud. Hop aboard," said Shorty Junior.

"That then accounts for his peculiar appearance," remarked Puffit, climbing into the saddle by the aid of the horse-block.

"Are yer all fixed now, alamagoozalum?" asked the kid, who was patting the mustang's neck to keep him quiet.

"Y-e-s," replied Puffin, hesitatingly.

"Den away yer hops," shouted Shorty Junior, letting go of the bridle and slapping his pony on the flanks.

"Get up!" cried Mr. Puffit, and Buster did get up, but in such an entirely unexpected manner that the clothes-pin agent slipped down over his tail and landed in an astonished heap in the street, amid shouts of laughter from the guests of the hotel, who had gathered on the steps to see the fun.

"W-h-a-t ma-made him do that?" inquired Mr. Puffit, arising, straightening out his crushed hat and glaring around at the grinning crowd.

"Yer reined 'im up teu tite," explained the kid, sticking his tongue in his cheek and winking.

Puffit allowed himself, after some persuasion, to be boosted into the saddle again by some of the grinning bystanders.

"Now den yer off sure," yelled the kid, and he told the truth, for Buster, suddenly humping his back, made a jump forward, braced his front feet rigidly and shot the old clothes-pin agent head first into an empty ash-barrel, while his package of samples were scattered in every direction.

He was pulled out, pinned up, brushed off, a rip in his coat mended the dents pressed out of his plug hat and his bloody and skinned nose wiped dry and gummed all over with sticking plaster, but all the persuasion of the laughing crowd could not induce him to go within ten feet of Buster again.

"Well, I guess dat ends der circus," said Shorty, turning to go in when the kid, who was holding Buster by the bridle, motioned him to remain.

"Ere, Sambo, d'yer know where Nixon's stable is?" he called out to a fat, jolly-looking darkey that was passing on the other side of the street.

"Nixon's stable; yes, sah."

"Den jest ride dis hoss 'round dere an' give 'im ter der hostler, an' 'ere's a half dollar for yer trouble," said the kid, holding out the coin.

"Ye ain't jokin', boss, is ye? Why, I'd ride de hoss half way 'roun' de world for a half a dollar, shuah," said the darkey, coming across the street, with a broad grin on his face.

"He's a little lazy, but yer can make 'im move, I guess," remarked Shorty Junior.

"Suah, I'll tickle 'im up, boss," replied the darkey, scrambling up into the saddle and kicking the horse in the ribs with his bare heels.

He did not have to kick him often. Before his heels could touch him the second time Buster had started ahead with a bound, halted with a jerk and bucked the darkey high in the air, moving out from under him at the same time and allowing the unfortunate moke to come down on the hard stones with a chug that unjointed his spine and loosened his scalp.

"What d'yer git off for?" demanded the kid as the darkey scrambled to his feet, felt of his scalp and looked around in a dazed and astonished manner.

"Boss, dere wasn't no 'arthquake heah, was dere?" he asked after a moment's reflection.

"Nary quake," said Shorty.

"Ye didn't see none of dose yaller nigs frow a brick at me, did ye?"

"Nary brick."

"An' dere wasn't none of der telegraf poles fell down onter me?"

"Nary pole."

"Den I 'spects it must 'ave been dat force ob grabitation dat I heahs so mitey much 'bout," observed Sambo, scratching his head as he mounted the horse again.

This time the mustang allowed himself to be ridden quietly as far as the corner. It was a short distance, and the darkey has since concluded it would have paid better to have walked, as Buster on reaching that point suddenly kicked up behind and hurled him through the plate-glass window of an ice-cream saloon, the proprietor of which rushed forth, with anger in his face and a broom handle in his paws, and at once proceeded to interview the darkey over the head with it, while Shorty, Shanks and the kid leaned up against the pillars of the hotel and roared with laughter.

"He fluttered thro' der air lik' a flyin' machine out on a drunk," grinned Shorty Junior as he started over, caught hold of Buster's bridle and led him off to the stable.

After performing a week to bully good houses, in which the "standing room only" placard was hung out nightly, the New York Minstrels received their orders to once more get up and get.

"Where's the next hold-up spot on your programme?" asked Dave Reed as the party were seated in the smoking room enjoying cigars.

"Well, I was goin' to scoop in Richmond, but I've changed my mind, an' we'll rustle 'long ter New York straight," replied Shorty quietly.

Had a bombshell come through the roof and exploded in their midst it could hardly have caused greater excitement than did our little hero's words.

"What?" shouted Dave as he swung his hat up to the ceiling.

"Where?"

"Hoop la!"

"Say it some more, boss!"

"Hip! hip! for old New York!"

"How are you, hunky old New York?"

"That's the bulliest news I've heard if Shorty ain't coddling us!" screamed the troupe, dancing around the room with joy.

"Nary cod, fellers, so ye'd better skate off an' wrestle wid yer Saratogs, for der scow we're goin' by floats out from der Levee dis afternoon," answered Shorty.

"That settles it. Now pipe me off slinging luggage," shouted Tambo.

"Clear the track and watch your uncle slam things into that old pie box of mine," exclaimed Shanks.

"Waltz this way, togs, an' see the boss packer hustle yer into his refrigerator, the same as you were greased," laughed Bones, making a break for his room, followed by the rest of the whooping, yelping crowd, and for the next half hour trunks were yanked around, stuffed, jammed, swore at, jumped on, kicked, strapped, locked and thrown downstairs.

"How 'bout Buster, dad?" asked the kid, skipping into the room.

"I fixed dat all O K, Chip. Dey're goin' ter shove 'im on in a box car dis afternoon, so he'll be in New York 'fore yer."

"Bully for yer, pop," said the youngster, darting away to say good-bye to somebody.

At three P. M. sharp the steamer New Orleans pulled out from the Levee with the New York Minstrels on board.

"Now den, kid, der fust t'ing we'd better do is ter polka down an' hav' a squint at der pantry dat dey call our state-room," observed Shorty as they steamed down the river.

After inspecting their bunks, they returned to the deck and joined the rest of the troupe, who were seated aft admiring the beautiful places along the banks of the river.

"I t'ink dat I'll take a spin 'roun' der cabin, gov, an' see what's goin' on," said the kid, who never seemed happy or contented without he was stirring up some racket.

"Cruise ahead; only don't yer plump yerself overboard or some of dem big catfish 'll scoff yer," replied his dad.

"Oh, I'm a swimmist 'fi ain't a Jonah," laughed Chip, trotting away to the cabin, where, after glancing around for a moment, he singled out a fat old lady who was nervously fanning herself, and said:

"Hist, dere's a bar ahead."

"Goodness gracious, child, you don't say so!" exclaimed the old lady, dropping her fan.

"Yer bet yer bustle. I'se tellin' yer der gospel-shop truth."

"Will we strike it?" she asked, growing pale and springing from the sofa.

"Ker splang! it's jest for'ard dere. I thort I'd best scud in an' hitch a couple of life-pursurvers 'roun' yer, den I'll p'int yer out der bar yerself. 'Tain't hard ter see, 'count of der strong glasses dat dey've got."

"Bless you, my dear boy, bless you! Oh, dear, do hurry up, though," she pleaded earnestly.

Shorty Junior did exert himself to the utmost, and in less than ten minutes he led her through the cabin looking like a rhinoceros with a mattress tied around it and pointed her out the bar, where spirituous liquors were dealt out.

"What's that, child?" she demanded, a sudden thought flashing through her brain.

"Why dat's der bar. Ain't yer goin' tu do somethin' for der boys?" explained the kid.

"Drat your impudence, you sass box! I'll do something for you," she screamed, and she wasn't two seconds peeling herself of her life preservers and starting off in full chase after the kid, and it required the united efforts of two passengers and the stewardess to quiet her down and put her in her state-room.

"Crickey! but she got her back up," said the kid, coming down from the rigging where he had perched himself.

Entering the cabin once more, he approached an old gentleman, who was dozing off to sleep, and after waking him up by tickling his ear with a feather, he said:

"Wild elerphants is kinder rampageous t'ings, ain't dey?"

"Hey?" exclaimed the old fellow, opening his eyes with a snap and brushing a fly off his bald head.

"An' day ortent be let eat dere trunks, ort they?"

"Eat their trunks, bless me, no!" exclaimed the old fellow, sitting up very straight.

"Mebbe yer didn't see or smell dat trunk dat dey've got 'board here?" asked the kid.

"Trunk aboard here—the devil!"

"Come 'long till I show it ter yer," said the youth, and he piloted the old fellow across the cabin to Shanks' room and pointed him out his Saratoga trunk.

"Oh-h-h-h! I see," observed the old gentleman, grimly, and he tried his best to catch his youthful informant by the ear, but after he had chased him half a dozen times around the cabin, tripped over a sofa and upset a waiter carrying in the dinner, he gave it up as a bad job and went out on deck to cool off.

"Dat ole codger got as huffy 's if he'd never seen a trunk 'fore," grinned Shorty Junior, scrambling out from under the sofa.

Then he cut out in front of the steamer and after glancing over the side, suddenly yelled:

"Man overboard!"

Of course everything was excitement in a moment. Men

rushed frantically here and there. The officers shouted orders, boats were lowered, the headway of the steamer stopped, and water backed, bells were rung, whistles blown, chairs, gratings and everything that would float and support a sinking man was stossed into the river.

"Where is he?" yelled the first officer.

"Hang'd if I've seen him yet," answered the pilot, gazing over the side.

"Say, boy, where's that man that was overboard?" demanded the captain, rushing up to Shorty Junior in a perfect hailstorm of perspiration.

"Why, dere's he's ober dere, waterin' his mules," said the kid, innocently, as he pointed to an old darkey who was watering a pair of mules at the river's edge.

"Great jumping Jupiter!" yelled the captain and he aimed a savage kick at the kid, which missed its mark and sent an old lady's reticule flying into the river, amid the shouts of laughter of the passengers, who had tumbled to the joke.

The rest of the run proved a stormy one, and the majority of the passengers hugged their staterooms so closely that there was but small opportunity for Shorty Junior to indulge in many rackets, although he was constantly trying to tempt the invalid's appetites with chunks of fat pork tied on a string, which rarity he assured them would stay down till he pulled it up, and the sight of which generally had the effect of making the seasick minstrel hang his head over the side and yelp "New-oh-York" before the sight of the city gladdened his eyes.

But time, tide and steamers wait for no one, and a few days later the New Orleans steamed into the New York harbor and our fun-loving little band once more set foot in the old metropolis.

"Hacks for der Fifth avenue hash house, an' don't fetch 'roun' any of yer skinnymadoodle rigs," said Shorty as they landed on the wharf.

"Back ter home ag'in, oh, my rumstead, pummy diddle, nip cat, soot-bag, hip hoorar an' ain't I glad!" shouted the kid, sticking a pin into Shanks' legs and causing him to spring up in the air with an exclamation of pain.

Boys, if I was to tell you that the week's performances in New York were a success you would simply laugh at me. It was a jam, pack, crowd, stuff, make room for just one more. Everybody was there. Everybody wanted to see New York's pet, Shorty and his racketing boy, Shorty Junior.

The Grand Opera House was tested to its utmost standing, seating, aisle filling and jamming accommodation, and thousands were turned away nightly for want of even standing room.

Shorty and Shorty Junior were, of course, the boss trumps in the deck. The boys of New York had been watching and reading of their rackets in SNAPS ever since their departure, and their reception before the footlights was not a welcome—it was an ovation. Round after round of genuine New York cheers shook the house. The ladies waved their handkerchiefs, the gentlemen threw bouquets and the "gods" yelled till the plaster on the ceiling trembled and Huckleberry Jim slung a bunch of sunflowers and potato blossoms on the stage with the remark:

"I hain't much of a snifty sniper on der bokey biz, but I'll scollop der ear off der fust bloke dat says dem ain't der boss boys in der nigger show biz an' der hunkiest fellers out."

And Huckleberry Jim's bouquet was the first one Shorty picked up.

At the close of the week's performance Shorty called the troupe together and said:

"Well, fellers, der time's com' 'long at last when we've got ter shake an' bust up, an' 'fore der ol' crowd splits I wanted ter t'ank yer, ebery one, for der squar', bully way yer done yer biz. As for myself and Shanks, we're sorter goin' ter take a back seat an' let Chip hol' der reins an' boss a new troupe dat he's goin' ter start an' which Shanks and I'll go 'long an' help ter run. Dat it's goin' ter be a red-hot troupe yer can bet, an' dat we're goin' ter hav' a lively, radketin' ol' time I'll guarantee. And now, boys, shake."

And now, having brought Shorty and the New York Minstrel Troupe back to their starting point, after a tour unequalled in the history of minstrelsy for fun and success, I will say "Good-bye" and let the curtain drop on "THE TWO SHORTYS."

And now, having seen Shorty and Shorty Junior safe through their many travels, trials and tricks and landed them in New York, we will take leave of them with the assurance that if in the future anything worth recording of them comes up we will let SNAPS have the benefit of it.

[THE END.]

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"You bet I will," said Terry, smacking his lips, and, taking the can from Fred, took three swallows and smacked his lips in such a way as to make the hobo's mouths fairly water.